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WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

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WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

WAR, THE SUNDERER, HAD REACHED THEM WITH HIS GREAT DIVORCE

We Can't Have Everything

A NOVEL

By RUPERT HUGHES

AUTHOR OF

"In A Little Town," "The Thirteenth Commandment,"
"Clipped Wings," Etc.

With Frontispiece
By JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAG

A. L. BURT COMPANY

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WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

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THE FIRST BOOK

MISS KEDZIE THROPP COMES TO TOWN

WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

CHAPTER I

KEDZIE THROPP had never seen Fifth Avenue or a yacht or a butler or a glass of champagne or an ocean or a person of social prominence. She wanted to see them.

For each five minutes of the day and night, one girl comes to New York to make her life; or so the compilers of statistics claim.

This was Kedzie Thropp's five minutes.

She did not know it, and the two highly important, because extremely wealthy, beings in the same Pullman car never suspected her—never imagined that the tangle they were already in would be further knotted, then snipped, then snarled up again, by this little mediocrity.

We never can know these things, but go blindly groping through the crowd of fellow-gropers, guessing at our presents and getting our pasts all wrong. What could we know of our futures?

Jim Dyckman, infamously rich (through no fault of his own), could not see far enough past Charity Coe Cheever that day to make out Kedzie Thropp, a few seats removed. Charity Coe—most of Mrs. Cheever's friends still called her by her maiden name—sat with her back turned to Kedzie; and latterly Charity Coe was not looking over her shoulder much. She did not see Kedzie at all.

And Kedzie herself, shabby and commonplace, was so ignorant that if she looked at either Jim or Charity Coe she gave them no heed, for she had never even heard of them or seen their pictures, so frequent in the papers.

They were among the whom-not-to-know-argues-one-self-unknowns. But there were countless other facts that argued Kedzie Thropp unknown and unknowing. As she was forever saying, she had never had anything or been anywhere or seen anybody worth having, being, or seeing.

But Jim Dyckman, everybody said, had always had everything, been everywhere, known everybody who was anybody. As for Charity Coe, she had given away more than most people ever have. And she, too, had traveled and met.

Yet Kedzie Thropp was destined (if there is such a thing as being destined—at any rate, it fell to her lot) to turn the lives of those two bigwigs topsy-turvy, and to get her picture into more papers than both of them put together. A large part of latter-day existence has consisted of the fear or the favor of getting pictures in the papers.

It was Kedzie's unusual distinction to win into the headlines at her first entrance into New York, and for the quaintest of reasons. She had somebody's else picture published for her that time; but later she had her very own published by the thousand until the little commoner, born in the most neglected corner of oblivion, grew impudent enough to weary of her fame and prate of the comforts of obscurity!

Kedzie Thropp was as plebeian as a ripe peach swung in the sun across an old fence, almost and not quite within the grasp of any passer-by. She also inspired appetite, but always somehow escaped plucking and possession. It is doubtful whether anybody ever really tasted her soul—if she had one. Her flavor was that very inaccessibility. She was always just a little beyond. Her heart was forever fixed on the next thing, just quitting the last thing.

Eternal, delicious, harrowing discontent was Kedzie's whole spirit.

Charity Coe's habit was self-denial; Kedzie's self-fostering, all-demanding. She was what Napoleon would have been if the Little Corporal had been a pretty girl with a passion for delicacies instead of powers.

Thanks to Kedzie, two of the best people that could be were plunged into miseries that their wealth only aggravated.

Thanks to Kedzie, Jim Dyckman, one of the richest men going and one of the decentest fellows alive, learned what it means to lie in shabby domicile and to salt dirty bread with tears; to be afraid to face the public that had fawned on him, and to understand the portion of the criminal and the pariah.

And sweet Charity Coe, who had no selfishness in any motive, who ought to have been canonized as a saint in her smart Parisian robes of martyrdom, found the clergy slamming their doors in her face and bawling her name from their pulpits; she was, as it were, lynched by the Church, thanks again to Kedzie.

But one ought not to hate Kedzie. It was not her fault (was it?) that she was cooked up out of sugar and spice and everything nice into a little candy allegory of selfishness with one pink hand over her little heartless heart-place and one pink hand always outstretched for more.

Kedzie of the sugar lip and the honey eye! She was going to be carried through New York from the sub-sub-cellar of its poverty to its highest tower of wealth. She would sleep one night alone under a public bench in a park, and another night, with all sorts of nights between, she would sleep in a bed where a duchess had lain, and in arms Americanly royal.

So much can the grand jumble of causes and effects that we call fate do with a wanderer through life.

During the same five minutes which were Kedzie's other girls were making for New York; some of them

to succeed apparently, some of them to fail undeniably, some of them to become fine, clean wives; some of them to flare, then blacken against the sky because of famous scandals and fascinating crimes in which they were to be involved.

Their motives were as various as their fates, and only one thing is safe to say—that their motives and their fates had little to do with one another. Few of the girls, if any, got what they came for and strove for; and if they got it, it was not just what they thought it was going to be.

This is Kedzie's history, and the history of the problem confronting Jim Dyckman and Charity Coe Cheever: the problem that Kedzie was going to seem to solve—as one solves any problem humanly, which is by substituting one or more new problems in place of the old.

This girl Kedzie who had never had anything had one thing—a fetching pout. Perhaps she had the pout because she had never had anything. An Elizabethan poet would have said of her upper lip that a bee in search of honey had stung it in anger at finding it not the rose it seemed, but something fairer.

She had eyes full of appeal—appeal for something—what? Who knows? She didn't. Her eyes said, "Have mercy on me; be kind to me." The shoddy beaux in her home town said that Kedzie's eyes said, "Kiss me quick!" They had obeyed her eyes, and yet the look of appeal was not quenched. She came to New York with no plan to stay. But she did stay, and she left her footprints in many lives, most deeply in the life of Jim Dyckman.

CHAPTER II

MISS KEDZIE THROPP had never seen Fifth Avenue or a yacht or a butler or a glass of champagne or an ocean or a person of social prominence. She wanted to see them. To Jim Dyckman these things were commonplace. What he wanted was simple, complex, cheap, priceless things—love, home, repose, contentment.

He was on the top of the world, and he wanted to get down or have somebody else come up to him. Peaks are by definition and necessity limited to small foothold. Climbing up is hardly more dangerous than climbing down. Even to bend and lift some one else up alongside involves a risk of falling or of being pushed overboard.

But at present Jim Dyckman was thinking of the other girl, Charity Coe Cheever, perched on a peak as cold and high as his own, but far removed from his reach.

Even the double seat in the sleeping-car was too small for Jim. He sprawled from back to back, slumped and hunched in curves and angles that should have looked peasant and yet somehow had the opposite effect.

His shoes were thick-soled but unquestionably expensive, his clothes of loose, rough stuff manifestly fashionable. Like them, he had a kind of burly grace. He had been used to a well-upholstered life.

He was one of those giants that often grow in rich men's homes. His father was such another, and his mother suggested the Statue of Liberty in corsets and on high heels.

Dyckman was reading a weekly journal devoted to

horses and dogs, and reading with such interest that he hardly knew when the train stopped.

He did not see the woman who got out of a motor and got into the train, and whose small baggage the porter put in the empty place opposite his. He did not see that she leaned into the aisle and regarded him with a pathetic amusement in her caressing eyes. She took her time about making herself known; then she uttered only a discreet:

"Ahem!"

She put into the cough many subtle implications. Hardly more could be crowded into a shrug.

Dyckman came out of his kennels and paddocks, blinked, stared, gaped. Then he began to stand up by first stepping down. He bestrode the narrow aisle like a Colossus.

He caught her two hands, brought them together, placed them in one of his, and covered them with the other as in a big muff, and bent close to pour into her eyes such ardor that for a moment she closed hers against the flame.

Then, as if in that silent greeting their souls had made a too loud and startling noise of welcome, both of them looked about with an effect of surreptition and alarm.

There were not many people in the car, and they were absorbed in their own books, gossips, or naps. Only a few head-tops showing above the high-backed seats, and no eyes or ears.

"Do you know anybody on the train?" the woman asked.

The man shook his head and sank into the seat opposite her, still clinging to her hands. She extricated them:

"But everybody knows you."

He dismissed this with a sniff of reproof. Then they settled down in the small trench and seemed to take a childish delight in the peril of their rencounter.

"Lord, but it's good to see you!" he sighed, luxuriously. "And you're stunninger than ever!"

"I'm a sight!" she said.

She was clad even more plainly than he, and had the same spirit of neglectful elegance. She was big, too, for a woman; somewhat lank but well muscled, and decisive in her motions as if she normally abounded in strength. What grace she had was an athlete's, but she looked overtrained or undernourished. Seeing that she did not look well, Dyckman said:

"How well you're looking, Charity."

She did not look like Charity, either; but her name had been given to her before she was born. There had nearly always been a girl called Charity in the Coe family. They had brought the name with them from New England when they settled in Westchester County some two hundred years before. They had kept little of their Puritanism except a few of the names.

This sportswoman called Charity had been trying to live up to her name, of late. That was why she was haggard. She smiled at her friend's unmerited praise.

"Thanks, Jim. I need a compliment like the devil."

"Where've you been since you got back?"

"Up in the camp, trying to get a little rest and exercise. But it's too lonesome nights. I rest better when I keep on the jump."

"You're in black; that doesn't mean—?"

She shook her head. A light of eagerness in his eyes was quenched, and he growled:

"Too bad!" He could afford to say it, since the object of his obloquy was alive. If the person mentioned had not been alive, the phrase he used would have been the same more gently intoned.

Charity protested: "Shame on you! I know you mean it for flattery, but you mustn't, you really mustn't. I'm in black for—for Europe." She laughed pitifully at the conceit.

He answered, with admiring awe: "I've heard about you. You're a wonder; that's what you are, Charity

Coe, a wonder. Here's a big hulk like me loafing around trying to kill time, and a little tike like you over there in France spending a fortune of money and more strength than even you've got in a slaughter-house of a war hospital. How did you stand it?"

"It wasn't much fun," she sighed, "but the nurses can't feel sorry for themselves when they see—what they see."

"I can imagine," he said.

But he could not have imagined her as she daily had been. She and the other princesses of blood royal or bourgeois had been moiling among the red human débris of war, the living garbage of battle, as the wagons and trains emptied it into the receiving stations.

She and they had stood till they slept standing. They had done harder, filthier jobs than the women who worked in machine-shops and in furrows, while the male-kind fought. She had gone about bedabbled in blood, her hair drenched with it. Her delicate hands had performed tasks that would have been obscene if they had not been sublime in a realm of suffering where nothing was obscene except the cause of it all.

She sickened at it more in retrospect than in action, and tried to shake it from her mind by a change of subject.

"And what have you been up to, Jim?"

"Ah, nothing but the same old useless loafing. Been up in the North Woods for some hunting and fishing," he snarled. His voice always grew contemptuous when he spoke of himself, but idolatrous when he spoke of her—as now when he asked: "I heard you had gone back abroad. But you're not going, are you?"

"Yes, as soon as I get my nerves a little steadier."

"I won't let you go back!" He checked himself. He had no right to dictate to her. He amended to: "You mustn't. It's dangerous crossing, with all those submarines and floating mines. You've done your bit and more."

"But there's so horribly much to do."

"You've done enough. How many children have you got now?"

"About a hundred."

"Holy mother!" he whispered, with a profane piety. "Can even you afford as big a family as that?"

"Well, I've had to call for some help."

"Let me chip in? Will you?"

"Sure I will. Go as far as you like."

"All right; it's a bet. Name the sum, and I'll mail it to you."

"You'd better not mail me anything, Jim," she said.

He blenched and mumbled: "Oh, all right! I'll write you a check now."

"Later," she said. "I don't like to talk much about such things, please."

"Promise me you won't go back."

She simply waived the theme: "Let's talk of something pleasant, if you don't mind."

"Something pleasant, eh? Then I can't ask about—him, I suppose."

"Of course. Why not?"

"How is the hound?—begging the pardon of all honest hounds."

She was too sure of her own feelings toward her husband to feel it necessary to rush to his defense—against a former rival. Her answer was, "He's well enough to raise a handsome row if he saw you and me together."

He grumbled a full double-barreled oath and did not apologize for it. She spoke coldly:

"You'd better go back to your seat."

She was as severe as a woman can well be with a man who adores her and writhes with jealousy of a man she adores.

"I'll be good, Teacher," he said. "Was he over there with you?"

She evidently liked to talk about her husband. She brightened as she spoke. "Yes, for a while. He drove

a motor-ambulance, you know, but it bored him after a month or two. They wouldn't let him up to the firing-lines, so he quit. Have you seen him?"

"Once or twice."

"He's looking well, isn't he?"

"Yes, confound him! His handsome features have been my ruin."

She could smile at that inverted compliment. But Dyckman began to think very hard. He was suddenly confronted with one of the conundrums in duty which life incessantly propounds—life that squats at all the crossroads with a sphinxic riddle for every wayfarer.

CHAPTER III

KEDZIE—to say it again—did not know enough about New York or the world to recognize Mrs. Cheever and Mr. Dyckman when she glanced at them and glanced away. They did not at all come up to Kedzie's idea or ideal of what swells should be, and she had not even grown up enough to study the society news that makes such thrilling reading to those who thrill to that sort of thing. The society notes in the town paper in Kedzie's town (Nimrim, Missouri) consisted of bombastic chronicles of church sociables or lists of those present at surprise-parties.

This girl's home was one of the cheapest in that cheap town. Her people not only were poor, but lived more poorly than they had to. They had, in consequence, a little reserve of funds, which they took pride in keeping up. The three Thropps came now to New York for the first time in their three lives. They were almost as ignorant as the other peasant immigrants that steam in from the sea.

Adna Thropp, the father, was a local claim-agent on a small railroad. He spent his life pitting his wits against the petty greed of honest farmers and God-fearing, railroad-hating citizens. If a granger let his fence fall down and a rickety cow disputed the right of way with a locomotive's cow-catcher, the granger naturally put in a claim for the destruction of a prize-winning animal with a record as an amazing milker; also he added something for damage to the feelings of the family in the loss of a household pet. It was Adna's business to beat the shyster

lawyers to the granger and beat the granger to the last penny. One of his best baits was a roll of cash tantalizingly waved in front of his victim while he breathed proverbs about the delayful courts.

This being Adna's livelihood, it was not surprising that his habit of mind gave pennies a grave importance. Of course, he carried his mind home with him from the office, and every demand of his wife or children for money was again a test of ability in claim-agency tactics. He fought so earnestly for every cent he gave down that his dependents felt that it was generally better to go without things than to enter into a life-and-death struggle for them with Pa.

For that reason Ma Thropp did the cooking, baked the "light bread," and made the clothes and washed them and mended them till they vanished. She cut the boys' hair; she schooled the girls to help her in the kitchen and at the sewing-machine and with the preserve-jars. Her day's work ended when she could no longer see her darning-needle. It began as soon as she could see daylight to light the fire by. In winter the day began in her dark, cold kitchen long before the sun started his fire on the eastern hills.

She upheld a standard of morals as high as Mount Everest and as bleak. She made home a region of everlasting chores, rebukes, sayings wiser than tender, complaints and bitter criticisms of husband, children, merchants, neighbors, weather, prices, fabrics—of everything on earth but of nothing in heaven.

Strange to say, the children did not appreciate the advantages of their life. The boys had begun to earn their own money early by the splitting of wood and the shoveling of snow, by the vending of soap, and the conduct of delivery-wagons. They spent their evenings at pool-tables or on corners. The elder girls had accepted positions in the various emporia of the village as soon as they could. They counted the long hours of the shop life

as an escape from worse. Their free evenings were not devoted to self-improvement. They did not turn out to be really very good girls. They were up to all sorts of village mischief and shabby frivolity. Their poor mother could not account for it. She could scold them well, but she could not scold them good.

The daughter on the train, the youngest—named Kedzie after an aunt who was the least poor of the relatives—was just growing up into a similar career. Her highest prayer was that her path might lead her to a clerkship in a candy-shop. Then this miracle! Her father announced that he was going to New York.

Adna was always traveling on the railroad, but he had never traveled far. To undertake New York was hardly less remarkable than to run over to the moon for a few days.

When he brought the news home he could hardly get up the front steps with it. When he announced it at the table, and tried to be careless, his hand trembled till the saucerful of coffee at his quivering lips splashed over on the clean red-plaid table-cloth.

The occasion of Thropp's call to New York was this: he had joined a "benevolent order" of the Knights of Something-or-other in his early years and had risen high in the chapter in his home town. When one of the members died, the others attended his funeral in full regalia, consisting of each individual's Sunday clothes, enhanced with a fringed sash and lappets. Also there was a sword to carry. The advantage of belonging to the order was that the member got the funeral for nothing and his wife got the further consolation of a sum of money.

Mrs. Thropp bore her neighbors no more ill-will than they deserved, but she did enjoy their funerals. They gave her husband an excuse for his venerable silk hat and his gilded glave. Sometimes as she took her hands out of the dough and dried them on her apron to fasten his sash about him, she felt all the glory of a medieval

countess buckling the armor on her doughty earl. She had never heard of such persons, but she knew their epic uplift.

Now, Mr. Thropp had paid his dues and his insurance premiums for years and years. They were his one extravagance. Also he had persuaded Mrs. Thropp's brother Sol to do the same. Sol had died recently and left his insurance money to Mrs. Thropp. Sol's own wife, after cherishing long-deferred hopes of spending that money herself, had been hauled away first. She never got that insurance money. Neither did any one else; the central office in New York failed to pay up.

The annual convention was about to be held in the metropolis, and there was to be a tremendous investigation of the insurance scandal. Adna was elected the delegate of the Nimrim chapter, for he was known to be a demon in a money-fight.

And this was the glittering news that Adna brought home. Small wonder it spilled his coffee. And that wife of his not only had to go and yell at him about a little coffee-stain, but she had to announce that she hardly saw how she could get ready to go right away—and who was to look after those children?

Adna's jaw fell. Perhaps he had ventured on dreams of being set free in New York all by himself. She soon woke him. She said she wouldn't no more allow him loose in that wicked place than she would—well, she didn't know what! He could get a pass for self and wife as easy as shootin'. Adna yielded to the inevitable with a sorry grace and told her to come along if she'd a mind to.

And then came a still, small voice from daughter Kedzie. She spoke with a menacing sweetness: "Goody, goody! Besides seeing New York, I won't have to go to school for— How long we goin' to be gone, poppa?"

Both parents stared at her aghast and told her to hush her mouth. It was a very pretty mouth even in anger, and Kedzie declined to hush it. She said:

"Well, if you two think you're goin' to leave me home, you got another think comin'—that's all I got to say." She betrayed an appalling stubbornness, a fiendish determination to subdue her parents or talk them to death. "I never get to go any place," she wailed. "I never been anywhere or seen anything or had anything; I might as well be a bump on a log. And now you're goin' to New York. I'd sooner go there than to heaven. It's my first chance to see a city, and I just tell you right here and now, I'm not goin' to lose it! You take me or you'll be mighty sorry. I'll—I'll—"

"You'll what?" her father sneered. What, after all, could a young girl do?

"I'll run off, that's what I'll do! And disgrace you! I'll run away and you'll never see me again. If you're mean enough to not take me, I'm mean enough to do something desprut. You'll see!"

Her father realized that there were several things a young girl could do to punish her parents. Kedzie frightened hers with her fanatic zeal. They gave in at last from sheer terror. Immediately she became almost intolerably rapturous. She shrieked and jumped; and she kissed and hugged every member of the household, including the dogs and the cats. She must go down-town and torment her girl friends with her superiority and she could hardly live through the hours that intervened before the train started.

The Thropps rode all day in the day-coach to Chicago, and Kedzie loved every cinder that flew into her gorgeous eyes. Now and then she slept curled up kittenwise on a seat, and the motion of the train lulled her as with angelic pinions. She dreamed impossible glories in unheard-of cities.

But her mother bulked large and had been too long accustomed to her own rocking-chair to rest in a day-coach. She reached Chicago in a state of collapse. She

told Adna that she would have to travel the rest of the way in a sleeper or in a baggage-car, for she just naturally had to lay down. So Adna paid for two berths. It weakened him like a hemorrhage.

Kedzie's first sorrow was in leaving Chicago. They changed trains there, bouncing across the town in a bus. That transit colored Kedzie's soul like dragging a ribbon through a vat of dye. Henceforth she was of a city hue.

She was enamoured of every cobblestone, and she loved every man, woman, horse, and motor she passed. She tried to flirt with the tall buildings. She was afraid to leave Chicago lest she never get to New York, or find it inferior. She begged to be left there. It was plenty good enough for her.

But once aboard the sleeping-car she was blissful again, and embarrassed her mother and father with her adoration. In all sincerity, Kedzie mechanically worshiped people who got things for her, and loathed people who forbade things or took them away.

She horrified the porter by calling him "Mister"—almost as much as her parents scandalized him the next day by eating their meals out of a filing-cabinet of shoe-boxes compiled by Mrs. Thropp. But it was all picnic to Kedzie. Fortunately for her repose, she never knew that there was a dining-car attached.

The ordeal of a night in a sleeping-car coffin was to Kedzie an experience of faery. She laughed aloud when she bumped her head, and getting out of and into her clothes was a fascinating exercise in contortion. She was entranced by the wash-room with its hot and cold water and its basin of apparent silver, whose contents did not have to be lifted and splashed into a slop-jar, but magically emptied themselves at the raising of a medallion.

She had not worn herself out with enthusiasm by the time the first night was spent and half the next day. She pressed her nose against the window and ached with regret

at the hurry with which towns and cities were whipped away from her eyes.

She did not care for grass and trees and cows and dull villages, but she thrilled at the beauty of big, dark railroad stations and noble street-cars and avenues paved with exquisite asphalt.

The train was late in arriving at New York, and it was nearer ten than eight when it roared across the Harlem River. Kedzie was glad of the display, for she saw the town first as one great light-spangled banner.

The car seemed to be drawn right through people's rooms. Everybody lived up-stairs. She caught glimpses of kitchens on the fourth floor and she thought this adorable, except that it would be a job carrying the wood all the way up.

The streets went by like the glistening spokes of a swift wheel. They were packed with interesting sights. No wonder most of the inhabitants were either in the streets or leaning out of the windows looking down. Here it was ten o'clock, and not a sign of anybody's having thought of going to bed. New York was a sensible place. She liked New York.

But the train seemed to quicken its pace out of mere spitefulness just as they reached wonderful market streets with flaring lights over little carts all filled with things to buy.

When the wonder world was blotted from view by the tunnel it frightened her at first with its long, dark noise and the flip-flops of light. Then a brief glimpse of towers and walls. Then the dark station. And they were There!

CHAPTER IV

JIM DYCKMAN had always loved Charity Coe, but he let another man marry her—a handsomer, livelier, more entertaining man with whom Dyckman was afraid to compete. A mingling of laziness and of modesty disarmed him.

As soon as he saw how tempestuously Peter Cheever began his courtship, Dyckman withdrew from Miss Coe's entourage. When she asked him why, he said, frankly:

"Pete Cheever's got me beat. I know when I'm licked."

Pete's courtship was what the politicians call a whirlwind campaign. Charity was Mrs. Cheever before she knew it. Her friends continued to call her Charity Coe, but she was very much married.

Cheever was a man of shifting ardors. His soul was filled with automatic fire-extinguishers. He flared up quickly, but when his temperature reached a certain degree, sprinklers of cold water opened in his ceiling and doused the blaze, leaving him unharmed and hardly scorched. It had been so with his loves.

After a brief and blissful honeymoon, Peter Cheever's capricious soul kindled at the thought of an exploration of war-filled Europe. His blushing bride was a hurdle-rider, too, and loved a risk-neck venture. She insisted on going with him.

He accepted the steering-wheel of a motor-ambulance and left his bride to her own devices while he shot along the poplar-plumed roads of France at lightning speed.

Charity drifted into hospital service. Her first soldier

the tortured victim of a gas-attack, was bewailing the fate of his motherless child. Charity brought a smile to what lips he had by whispering:

"I am rich. I will adopt your little girl."

It was the first time she had ever boasted of being rich. The man died, whispering: "*Merci, Madame! Merci, Madame!*" Another father was writhing in the premature hell of leaving a shy little unprotected boy to starve. Charity promised to care for him, too.

At a committee meeting, a week later, she learned of a horde of war orphans and divided them up with Muriel Schuyler, Mrs. Perry Merithew, and other American angels abroad.

When Charity's husband wearied of being what he called "chauffeur to a butcher-wagon," he decided that America was a pretty good country, after all. But Charity could not tear herself away from her privilege of suffering, even to follow her bridegroom home. He had cooled to her also, and he made no protest. He promised to come back for her. He did not come. He cabled often and devotedly, telling her how lonely he was and how busy. She answered that she hoped he was lonely, but she knew he was busy. He would be!

When Cheever first returned, Jim Dyckman saw him at a club. He saw him afterward in a restaurant with one of those astonishing animals which the moving pictures have hardly caricatured as a "vampire." This one would have been impossible if she had not been visible. She was intensely visible.

Jim Dyckman felt that her mere presence in a public restaurant was offensive. To think of her as displacing Charity Coe in Cheever's attentions was maddening. He understood for the first time why people of a sort write anonymous letters. He could not stoop to that degradation, and yet he wondered if, after all, it would be as degrading to play the informer as to be an unprotesting and therefore accessory spectator and confidant.

Gossip began to deal in the name of Cheever. One day at a club the he-old-maid "Prissy" Atterbury cackled:

"I saw Pete Cheever at a cabaret—"

Jim asked, anxiously, "Was he alone?"

"Nearly."

"What do you mean—nearly alone?"

"Well, what he had with him is my idea of next to nothing. I wonder what sinking ship Cheever rescued her from. They tell me she was a cabaret dancer named Zada L'Etoile—that's French for Sadie Starr, I suppose."

Dyckman's obsession escaped him.

"Somebody ought to write his wife about it."

"That would be nice!" cried Prissy. "Oh, very, very nice! It would be better to notify the Board of Health. But it would be still better if his wife would come home and mind her own business. These Americans who hang about the edges of the war, fishing for sensations, make me very tired—oh, very, very tired."

Prissy never knew how near he was to annihilation. Jim had to hold one fist with the other. He was afraid to yield to his impulse to smash Prissy in the droop of his mustache. Prissy was too frail to be slugged. That was his chief protection in his gossip-mongering career. Besides, it is a questionable courtesy for a former beau to defend another man's wife's name, and Dyckman proved his devotion to Charity best by leaving her slanderer unrebuked.

It was no anonymous letter that brought Charity Coe home. It was the breakdown of her powers of resistance. Even the soldiers had to be granted vacations from the trenches; and so an eminent American surgeon in charge of the hospital she adorned finally drove Mrs. Cheever back to America. He disguised his solicitude with brutality; he told her he did not want her to die on their hands.

When Charity came back, Cheever met her and cele-

brated her return. She was a new sensation to him again for a week or two, but her need of seclusion and quiet drove him frantic and he grew busy once more. He recalled Miss L'Etoile from the hardships of dancing for her supper. Unlike Charity, Zada never failed to be exciting. Cheever was never sure what she would do or say or throw next. She was delicious.

When Dyckman learned of Cheever's extra establishment it enraged him. He had let Cheever push him aside and carry off Charity Coe, and now he must watch Cheever push Charity Coe aside and carry on the next choice of his whims.

To Dyckman, Charity was perfection. To lose her and find her in the ash-barrel with Cheever's other discarded dolls was intolerable. Yet what could Dyckman do about it? He dared not even meet Charity. He hated her husband, and he knew that her husband hated him. Cheever somehow realized the dogged fidelity of Dyckman's love for Charity and resented it—feared it as a menace, perhaps.

Dyckman had two or three narrow escapes from running into Charity, and he finally took to his heels. He lingered in the Canadian wilds till he thought it safe to return. And now she chanced to board the same train. The problem he had run away from had cornered him.

He had cherished a sneaking hope that she would learn the truth somehow before he met her. He was not sure what she ought to do when she learned it. He was sure that what she would do would be the one right thing.

Yet he realized from her placid manner of parrying his threats at her husband that she still loved the wretch and trusted him. It was up to Jim to tell her what he knew about Cheever. He felt that he ought to. Yet how could he?

It was hideous that she should sit there smiling tolerantly at a critic of her infernal husband as serenely as a priestess who is patient with an unenlightened skeptic.

It was atrocious that Cheever should be permitted to prosper with this scandal unrebuked, unpunished, actually unsnubbed, accepting the worship of an angel like Charity Coe and repaying it with black treachery! To keep silent was to co-operate in the evil—to pander to it. Dyckman thought it was hideous. The word he thought was "rotten"!

He actually opened his mouth to break the news. His voice mutinied. He could not say a word.

Something throttled him. It was that strange instinct which makes criminals of every degree feel that no crime is so low but that tattling on it is a degree lower.

Dyckman tried to assuage his self-contempt by the excuse that Charity was not in the mood or in the place where such a disclosure should be made. Some day he would tell her and then ask permission to kill the blackguard for her.

The train had scuttered across many a mile while he meditated the answer to the latest riddle. His thoughts were so turbulent that Charity finally intruded.

"What's on your mind, Jim?"

"Oh, I was just thinking."

"What about?"

"Oh, things."

Suddenly he reached out and seized the hand that drooped at her knee like a wilted lily. He wrung her fingers with a vigor that hurt her, then he said, "Got any dogs to show this season?"

She laughed at the violent abruptness of this, and said, "I think I'll give an orphan-show instead."

He shook his head in despairing admiration and leaned back to watch the landscape at the window. So did she. On the windows their own reflections were cast in transparent films of light. Each wraith watched the other, seeming to read the mood and need no speech.

Dyckman's mind kept shuttling over and over the same rails of thought, like a switch-engine eternally shunting

cars from one track to another. His very temples throbbed with the *clickety-click* of the train. At last he groaned:

"This world's too much for me. It's got me guessing."

He seemed to be so impressed with his original and profound discovery of life's unanswerable complexity that Charity smiled, the same sad, sweet smile with which she pored on the book of sorrow or listened to the questions of her orphans who asked where their fathers had gone.

She thought of Jim Dyckman as one of her orphans. There was a good deal of the mother in her love of him. For she did love him. And she would have married him if he had asked her earlier—before Peter Cheever swept over her horizon and carried her away with his zest and his magnificence.

She rebuked herself for thinking of Jim Dyckman as an orphan. He had a father and mother who doted on him. He had wealth of his own and millions to come. He had health and brawn enough for two. What right had he to anybody's pity? Yet she pitied him.

And he pitied her.

And on this same train, in this same car, unnoticed and unnoticing, sat Kedzie.

Jim and Charity grew increasingly embarrassed as the train drew into New York. Charity was uncertain whether her husband would meet her or not. Jim did not want to leave her to get home alone. She did not want her husband to find her with Jim.

Cheever had excuse enough in his own life for suspecting other people. He had always disliked Jim Dyckman because Dyckman had always disliked him, and Jim's transparent face had announced the fact with all the clarity of an illuminated signboard.

Also Charity had loved Jim before she met Cheever, and she made no secret of being fond of him still. In their occasional quarrels, Cheever had taunted her with wishing she had married Jim, and she had retorted that

she had indeed made a big mistake in her choice. Lovers say such things—for lack of other weapons in such combats as lovers inevitably wage, if only for exercise.

Charity did not really mean what she said, but at times Cheever thought she did. He had warned her to keep away from Dyckman and keep Dyckman away from her or there would be trouble. Cheever was a powerful athlete and a boxer who made minor professionals look ridiculous. Dyckman was bigger, but not so clever. A battle between the two stags over the forlorn doe would be a horrible spectacle. Charity was not the sort of woman that longs for such a conflict of suitors. Just now she had seen too much of the fruits of male combat. She was sick of hatred and its devastation.

So Charity begged Dyckman to get off at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, but he would not show himself so poltroon. He answered, "I'd like to see myself!" meaning that he would not.

She retorted, "Then I'll get off there myself."

"Then I'll get off there with you," he grunbled.

Charity flounced back into her seat with a gasp of mitigated disgust. The mitigation was the irresistible thrill of his devotion. She had a husband who would desert her and a cavalier who would not. It was difficult not to forgive the cavalier a little.

Yet it would have been better if he had obeyed her command or she her impulse. Or would it have been? The worst might always have been worse.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Kedzie was angry she called her father an "old country Jake." Even she did not know how rural he was or how he had oppressed the sophisticated travelers in the smoking-room of the sleeping-car with his cocksure criticisms of cities that he had never seen. He had condemned New York with all the mercilessness of a small-town superiority, and he had told funny stories that were as funny as the moss-bearded cypresses in a lone bayou. While he was denouncing New York as the home of ignorance and vice, the other men were having sport with him—sport so cruel that only his own cruelty blinded him to it.

When the porter summoned the passengers to pass under the whisk broom, Adna remembered that he had not settled upon his headquarters in New York, and he said to a man on whom he had inflicted a vile cigar: "Say, I forgot to ask you. What's a good hotel in New York that ain't too far from the railroad and don't rob you of your last nickel? Or is they one?"

One of the smoking-room humorists mocked his accent and ventured a crude jape.

"You can save the price of a hack-ride by going to Mrs. Biltmore's new boarding-house. It's right across the road from the depot."

If Adna had been as keen as he thought he was, or if the porter had not alarmed him just then by his affectionate interest, even Adna would have noted the grins on the faces of the men.

But he broke the porter's heart by dodging the whisk broom and hustling his excited family to their feet. They

were permitted to hale their own hand-baggage to the platform, where two red-capped Kaffirs reached for it together. There was danger of an altercation, but the bigger of the two frightened the smaller away by snapping his shiny eyeballs alarmingly. The smaller one took a second look at Adna and retreated with scorn, snickering:

"You kin have him."

The other, who was a good loser at craps or tips, re-examined his clients, flickered his eyelids, and started down the platform to have it over with as soon as possible. He paused to say:

"Where you-all want to go to—a taxicab?"

Adna, who was a little nervous about his property, answered with some asperity:

"No, we don't need any hack to git to Biltmore's."

"Nossah!" said the red-cap.

"Right across the street, ain't it?"

"Yassah!" The porter chuckled. The mention of the family's destination had cheered him a little. He might get a tip, after all. You couldn't always sometimes tell by a man's clothes how he tipped.

While Kedzie stood watching the red-cap bestow the various parcels under his arms and along his fingers, a man bumped into her and murmured:

"Sorry!"

She turned and said, "Huh?"

He did not look around. She did not see his face. It was the first conversation between Jim Dyckman and Kedzie Thropp.

Charity Coe, when the train stopped, had flatly refused to walk up the station platform with Jim Dyckman. She had not only virtue, but St. Paul's idea of the importance of avoiding even the appearance of evil. She would not budge from the car till Jim had gone. He was forced to leave her at last.

He swung through the crowd in a fury, jostling and begging pardon and staring over the heads of the pack to

see if Cheever were at the barrier. He jolted Kedzie Thropp among others, apologized, and thought no more of her.

Cheever had not come to meet his wife. Her telegram was waiting for him at his official home; he was at his other residence.

When Dyckman saw that no one was there to welcome the fagged-out Charity, he paused and waited for her himself. When Charity came along her anxious eyes found nobody she knew except Dyckman. The disappointment she revealed hurt him profoundly. But he would not be shaken off again. He turned in at her side and walked along, and the two porters with their luggage walked side by side.

Prissy Atterbury was hurrying to a train that would take him for a week-end visitation to people who hated him but needed him to cancel a female bore with. As Prissy saw it and described it, Dyckman came into the big waiting-room alone, looked about everywhere, paused, turned back for Charity Coe; then walked away with her, followed by their twinned porters. Prissy said "Aha!" behind his big mustaches and stared till he nearly lost his train.

Atterbury had gained a new topic to carry with him, a topic of such fertile resources that it went far to pay his board and lodging. He made a snowball out of the clean reputations of Charity and Jim and started it downhill, gathering dirt and momentum as it rolled. It was bound to roll before long into the ken of Peter Cheever, and he was not the man to tolerate any levity in a wife. Cheever might be as wicked as Cæsar, but his wife must be as Cæsar's.

When Charity Coe was garrulous and inordinately gay, Jim Dyckman, who had known her from childhood, knew that she was trying to rush across the thin ice over some deep grief.

When he saw how hurt she was at not being met, and he insisted on taking her home, she chattered and snickered hysterically at his most stupid remarks. So he said:

"Don't let him break your heart in you, old girl."

She laughed uproariously, almost vulgarly, over that, and answered: "Me? Let a man break my heart? That's very likely, isn't it?"

"Very!" Jim groaned.

When they reached her magnificent home it had a deserted look.

"Wait here a minute," said Charity when Jim got out to help her out. She ran up the steps and rang the bell. There was a delay before the second man in an improvised toilet opened the door to her and expressed as much surprise as delight at seeing her. "Didn't Mr. Cheever tell you I was coming home?" she gasped.

"We haven't seen him, ma'am. There's a telegram here for him, but of course—"

Charity was still in a frantic mood. She wanted to escape brooding, at all costs. She ran back to where Jim waited at the motor door.

"Got any date to-night, Jim?" she demanded. He shook his head dolefully, and she said: "Go home, jump into your dancing-shoes, and come back for me. I'll throw on something light and you can take me somewhere to dance. I'll go crazy mad, insane, if you don't. I can't endure this empty house. You don't mind my making a convenience of you, do you, Jim?"

"I love it, Charity Coe," he groaned. He reached for her hand, but she was fleeting up the steps. He crept into the car and went to his home, flung off his traveling-togs, passed through a hot tub and a cold shower into evening clothes, and hastened away.

Charity kept him waiting hardly a moment. She floated down the stairs in a something fleecily volatile, and he said:

"You look like a dandelion puff."

"That's right, tell me some nice things," she said. She did not tell the servant where she was going. She did not know. She hardly cared.

CHAPTER VI

TO Kedzie Thropp the waiting-room of the Grand Central Terminal was the terminus of human splendor. It was the waiting-room to heaven. And indeed it is a majestic chamber.

The girl walked with her face high, staring at the loftily columned recesses with the bay-trees set between the huge square pillars, and above all the feigned blue sky and the monsters of the zodiac in powdered gold.

Kedzie could hardly breathe—it was so beautiful, so much superior to the plain every-night sky she was used to, with stars of tin instead of gold like these.

Even her mother said "Well!" and Adna paid the architects the tribute of an exclamation: "Humph! So this is the new station we was readin' about. Some bigger 'n ours at home, eh, Kedzie?"

But Kedzie was not there. They had lost her and had to turn back. She was in a trance. When they snatched her down to earth again and pulled her through the crowds she began to adore the people. They were dressed in unbelievable splendor—millions, she guessed, in far better than the best Sunday best she had ever seen. She wondered if she would ever have nice clothes. She vowed that she would if she had to murder somebody to get them.

The porter led the way from the vastitude of a corridor under the street and through vast empty rooms and up a stairway and down a few steps and through the first squirrel-cage door Kedzie had ever seen (she had to run round it thrice before they could get her out) into a sumptuousness beyond her dream.

At the foot of more stairs the porter let down his burdens, and a boy in a general's uniform seized them. The porter said, mopping his brow to emphasize his achievement:

"This is fur's I go."

"Oh, all right! Much obliged," said Adna. He just pretended to walk away as a joke on the porter. When he saw the man's white stare aggravated sufficiently, Adna smiled and handed him a dime.

The porter stared and turned away in bitter grief. Then his chuckle returned as he went his way, telling himself: "And the bes' of it was, I fit for him! I just had to git that man."

He told the little porter about it, and when the little porter, who had been scared away from the Thropps and left to carry Charity Coe's dainty hand-bags, showed the big porter what he had received, still the big porter laughed. He knew how to live, that big porter.

Kedzie followed the little general up the steps and around to the desk. Her father realized that his fellow-passenger had been teasing him when he referred to this place as a boarding-house, but he was not at all crushed by the magnificence he was encountering. He felt that he was in for it—so he cocked his toothpick pluckily and wrote on the loose-leaf register the room clerk handed him:

A. Thropp, wife and daughter, Nimrim, Mo.

The room clerk read the name as if it were that of a potentate whose incognito he would respect, and murmured:

"About what accommodation would you want, Mr. Thropp?"

"Two rooms—one for the wife and m'self, one for the daughter."

"Yes, sir. And about how much would you want to pay?"

"How do they run?"

"We can give you two nice adjoining rooms for twelve dollars—up."

Mr. Thropp made a hasty calculation. Twelve dollars a week for board and lodging was not so bad. He nodded.

The room clerk marked down a number and slid a key to the page, who gathered the family treasures together. Kedzie had more or less helplessly recognized the page's admiration of her when he first took the things from the porter. The sense of her beauty had choked the boy's amusement at her parents.

Later Kedzie caught the glance of the room clerk and saw that she startled him and cheated him of his smile at Adna. Still later the elevator-boy gave her one respectful look of approval. Kedzie's New York stir was already beginning.

The page ushered the Thropps into the elevator and said, "Nineteen."

It was the number of the floor, not the room. Adna warned his women folk that "she" was about to go up, but they were not prepared for that swift vertical leap toward the clouds. Another floor, and Mrs. Thropp would have screamed. The altitude affected her.

Then the thing stopped, and the boy led them down a corridor so long that Adna said, "Looks like we'd be stranded a hundred miles from nowheres."

The boy turned in at a door at last. He flashed on the lights, set the bags on a bag-rack, hung up the coats, opened a window, adjusted the shade, lighted the lights in Kedzie's room, opened her window, adjusted the shade, and asked if there were anything else.

Adna knew what the little villain meant, but he knew what was expected, and he said, sternly, "Ice-water."

"Right here, sir," said the boy, and indicated in the bathroom a special faucet marked "Drinking Water."

This startled even Adna so much that it shook a dime

out of him. . The boy sighed and went away. Kedzie surprised his eye as he left. It plainly found no fault with her.

Here in seclusion Mrs. Thropp dared to exclaim at the wonders of modern invention. Kedzie was enfranchised and began to jump and squeal at the almost suffocating majesty. Adna took to himself the credit for everything.

"Well, momma, here we are in New York at last. Here we are, daughter. You got your wish."

Kedzie nearly broke his neck with her hug, and called him the best father that ever was. And she meant it at the moment, for the moment.

Mrs. Thropp was already making herself at home, loosening her waistband and her corset-laces.

Adna made himself at home, too—that is, he took off his coat and collar and shoes. But Kedzie could not waste her time on comfort while there was so much ecstasy to be had.

She went to the window, shoved the sash high, and —discovered New York. She greeted it with an outcry of wonder. She called to her mother and father to "Come here and looky!"

Her mother moaned, "I wouldn't come that far to look at New Jerusalem."

Adna yawned noisily and pulled out his watch. His very eyes yawned at it, and he said: " 'Levum o'clock. Good Lord! Git to bed quick!"

Kedzie was furious at ending the day so abruptly. She wanted to go out for a walk, and they sent her to her room. She watched at the window as she peeled off her coarse garments and put her soft body into a rough night-gown as ill-cut and shapeless as she was neither. She had been turned by a master's lathe.

She waited till she heard her father's well-known snore seesawing through the panels. Then she went to the window again to gaze her fill at the town. She fell in love with it and told it so. She vowed that she would

never leave it. She had not come to a strange city; she had just reached home.

She leaned far out across the ledge to look down at the tremendously inferior street. She nearly pitched head foremost and scrambled back, but with a giggle of bliss at the excitement. She stared at the dark buildings of various heights before her. There was something awe-inspiring about them.

Across a space of roofs was the electric sign of an electric company, partly hidden by buildings. All Kedzie could see of it was the huge phrase LIGHT—HEAT—POWER. She thought that those three graces would make an excellent motto.

She could see across and down into the well of the Grand Central Terminal. On its front was some enormous winged figure facing down the street. She did not know who it was or what street it was. She did not know any of the streets by name, but she wanted to. She had a passionate longing for streets.

Farther south or north, east or west, or whichever way it was, was a tall building with glowing bulbs looped like the strings of evergreen she had helped to drape the home church with at Christmas-time. Here it was Christmas every day—all holidays in one.

Down in the ravine a little in front of her she could read the sign ATHENS HOTEL. She had heard of Athens. It was the capital of some place in her geography. She who had so much of Grecian in her soul was not quite sure of Athens!

In one of the opposite office buildings people were working late. The curtains were drawn, but the casements were filled with light, a honey-colored light. The buildings were like great honeycombs; the dark windows were like the cells that had no honey in them. Light and life were honey. Kedzie wondered what folks they were behind those curtains—who they were, and what were they up to. She bet it was something interesting. She

wished she knew them. She wished she knew a whole lot of city people. But she didn't know a soul.

It was all too glorious to believe. She was in New York! imparadised in New York!

"Kedzie! Ked-zee-ee!"

"Yes, momma."

"Are you in bed?"

"Yes, momma." She tried to give her voice a far-away, sleepy sound, for fear that her mother might open the door to be sure.

She crept into bed. The lights burned her weary eyes. She could not reach them to put them out.

By the head of her bed was a little toy lamp. A chain hung from it. She tugged at the chain—pouff! out went the light. She tugged at the chain. On went the light. A magical chain, that! It put the light on and off, both. Kedzie could find no chains to pull the ceiling lights out with. She let them burn.

Kedzie covered her head and yet could not sleep. She sat up quickly. Was that music she heard? Somebody was giving a party, maybe.

She got up and out again and ran barefoot to the hall door, opened it an inch, and peeked through. She saw a man and two ladies swishing along the hall to the elevator. They were not sleepy at all, and the ladies were dressed—whew! skirts short and no sleeves whatever. They really were going to a party.

Kedzie closed the door and drooped back to bed—an awful place to go when all the rest of the world was just starting out to parties.

She flopped and gasped in her bed like a fish ashore. Then a gorgeous whim came to her. She would dive into her element. Light and fun were her element. She came out of bed like a watch-spring leaping from a case. She tiptoed to the parental door—heard nothing but the rumor of slumber.

She began to dress. She put on her extra-good dress.

She had brought it along in the big valise in case of an accident to the every-day dress. When she had squirmed through the ordeal of hooking it up, she realized that its skirts were too long for decency. She pinned them up at the hem.

The gown had a village low-neck—that is, it was a trifle V'd at the throat. Kedzie tried to copy the corsage of the women who passed in the hall. She withdrew from the sleeves, and gathering the waist together under her arms, fastened it as best she could. The revelation was terrifying. All of her chest and shoulders and shoulder-blades were bare.

She dared hardly look at herself. Yet she could not possibly deny the fearful charm of those contours. She put her clothes on again and prinked as much as she could. Then she sallied forth, opening and closing the door with pious care. She went to the elevator, and the car began to drop. The elevator-boy politely lowered it without plunge or jolt.

Kedzie followed the sound of the music. The lobbies were thronged with brilliant crowds flocking from theaters for supper and a dance. Kedzie made her way to the edge of the supper-room. The floor, like a pool surrounded by chairs and tables, was alive with couples dancing contentedly. Every woman was in evening dress and so was every man. The splendor of the costumes made her blink. The shabbiness of her own made her blush.

She blushed because her own dress was indecent and immoral. It was indecent and immoral because it was unlike that of the majority. In this parish, conventionality, which is the one true synonym for morality, called for bare shoulders and arms unsleeved. Kedzie was conspicuous, which is a perfect synonym for immoral. If she had fallen through the ceiling out of a bathtub she could not have felt more in need of a hiding-place. She shrank into a corner and sought cover and concealment,

for she was afraid to go back to the elevator through the ceaseless inflow of the décolletées.

She throbbed to the music of the big band; her feet burned to dance; her waist ached for the sash of a manly arm. She knew that she could dance better than some of those stodgy old men and block-bodied old women. But she had no clothes on—for dancing.

But there was one woman whom Kedzie felt she could not surpass, a dazzling woman with a recklessly graceful young man. The young man took the woman from a table almost over Kedzie's head. They left at the table a man in evening dress who smoked a big cigar and seemed not to be jealous of the two dancers.

Some one among the spectators about Kedzie said that the woman was Zada L'Etoile, and her partner was Haviland Devoe. Zada was amazing in her postures and gyrations, but Kedzie thought that she herself could have danced as well if she had had that music, that costume, that partner, and a little practice.

When Zada had completed her calisthenics she did not sit down with Mr. Devoe, but went back to the table where the lone smoker sat. Now that she looked at him again, Kedzie thought what an extraordinarily handsome, gloriously wicked-looking, swell-looking man he was. Yet the girl who had danced called him Peterkin—which didn't sound very swell to Kedzie.

He had very little to say to Zada, who did most of the talking. He smiled at her now and then behind his cigar and gave her a queer look that Kedzie only vaguely understood. She thought little of him, though, because the next dance began, and she had a whole riot of costumes to study.

There was a constant movement of new-comers past Kedzie's nook. Sometimes people halted to look the crowd over before they went up the steps, and asked two handsome gentlemen in full-dress suits if they could have a table. The gentlemen—managers, probably, who got

up the party—usually said no. Sometimes they looked at papers in their hands and marked off something, and then the people got a table.

By and by two men and an elderly woman dressed like a very youngerly woman paused near Kedzie. Both of the men were tall, but the one called Jim was so tall he could see over the rail, or over the moon, for all Kedzie knew.

The elderly lady said, "Come along, boys; we're missing a love of a trot."

The less tall of the men said: "Now, mother, restrain yourself. Remember I've had a hard day and I'm only a young feller. How about you, Jim?"

"I'll eat something, but I'm not dancing, if you'll pardon me, Mrs. Duane," said Jim. "And I'm waiting for Charity Coe. She's in the cloak-room."

"Oh, come along," said Mrs. Duane. "I've got a table and I don't want to lose it."

She started away, and her son started to follow, but paused as the other man caught his sleeve and growled:

"I say, isn't that Pete Cheever—there, right there by the rail? Yes, it is—and with—!"

Then Tom gave a start and said: "Ssh! Here's Charity Coe."

Both men looked confused; then they brightened and greeted a new batch of drifters, and there was a babble of:

"Why, hello! How are you, Tom! How goes it, Jim? What's the good word, Mary? What you doing here, Charity, and all in black? Oh, I have to get out or go mad."

Kedzie, eavesdropping on the chatter, wondered at the commonplace names and the small-town conversation. With such costumes she must have expected at least blank verse.

She was interested to see what the stern sentinels would do to this knot of Toms, Jims, and Marys. She peeked around the corner, and to her surprise saw them greeted

with great cordiality. They smiled and chatted with the sentinels and were passed through the silken barrier.

Other people paused and passed in or were rejected. Kedzie watched Mr. Cheever with new interest, but not much understanding. He had next to nothing to say. After a time she overheard Zada say to him, raising her voice to top the noise of the band: "Say, Peterkin, see that great big lad over there, the human lighthouse by the sea? Peterkin, you can't miss him—he's just standing up—yes—isn't that Jim Dyckman? Is he really so rich as they say?"

"He's rotten rich!" said Peterkin.

Then Zada said something and pointed. She seemed to be excited, but not half so excited as Peter was. His face was all shot up with red, and he looked as if he had eaten something that didn't sit easy.

Then he looked as if he wanted to fight somebody. He began to chew on his words.

Kedzie caught only a few phrases in the holes in the noisy music.

"When did she get back? And she's here with him? I'll kill him—"

Kedzie stood on tiptoe, primevally trying to lift her ears higher still to hear what followed. She saw Zada putting her hand on Peter's sleeve, and she heard Zada say:

"Don't start anything here. Remember I got a reputation to lose, if you haven't."

This had the oddest effect on Peter. He stared at Zada, and his anger ran out of his face just as the water ran out of the silver washbowl in the sleeping-car. Then he began to laugh softly, but as if he wanted to laugh right out loud. He put his napkin up and laughed into that.

And then the anger he had lost ran up into Zada's face, and she looked at Peter as if she wanted to kill him.

Now it was Peter who put his hand on her arm and patted it and said, "I didn't mean anything."

Mean what? Kedzie wondered. But she had no

chance to find out, for Peter rose from the table and, dodging around the dancing couples, made his escape. He reappeared in the very nook where Kedzie watched, and called up to Zada:

"Did they see me?"

Zada shook her head. Peter threw her a kiss. She threw him a shrug of contempt. Peter went away laughing. Kedzie waited a few minutes and saw that Mr. Devoe had come to sit with Zada.

After a moment the music was resumed, and Zada rose to dance again with Mr. Devoe—a curious sort of dance, in which she lifted her feet high and placed them carefully, as if she were walking on a floor covered with eggs and didn't want to break any.

But Kedzie's eyes were filling with sand. They had gazed too long at brilliance. She dashed back to the elevator and to her room. She was exhausted, and she pulled off her clothes and let them lie where they fell. She slid her weary frame between the sheets and instantly slept.

Charity Coe danced till all hours with Jim, with Tom Duane and other men, and no one could have fancied that she had ever known or cared what horrors filled the war hospitals across the sea.

She was frantic enough to accept a luncheon engagement with Jim and his mother for the next day. She telephoned him in the morning: "Your angel of a mother will forgive me when you tell her I'm lunching down-town with my husband. The poor boy was detained at his office last night and didn't get my telegram till he got home. When he learned that I had come in and gone out again he was furious with himself and me. I hadn't left word where I was, so he couldn't come running after me. He waited at home and gave me a love of a call-down for my dissipation. It was a treat. I really think he was jealous."

Jim Dyckman did not laugh with her. He was thinking hard. He had seen Cheever at the Biltmore, and a little later Cheever vanished. Cheever must have seen Charity Coe then. And if he saw her, he saw him. Then why had he kept silent? Dyckman had a chilling intuition that Cheever was lying in ambush for him.

Again he was wrung with the impulse to tell Charity Coe the truth about her husband. Again some dubious decency withheld him.

CHAPTER VII

THE word "breakfast" was magic stimulant to the Thropps. Kedzie put on her clothes, and the family went down to the elevator together.

They found their way to the Tudor Room, where a small number of men, mostly barricaded behind newspapers, ate briskly. A captain showed the Thropps to a table; three waiters pulled out their chairs and pushed them in under them. Another laid large pasteboards before them. Another planted ice-water and butter and salt and pepper here and there.

Adna had traveled enough to know that the way to order a meal in a hotel is to give the waiter a wise look and say, "Bring me the best you got."

This waiter looked a little surprised, but he said, "Yes, sir. Do you like fruit and eggs and rolls, maybe?"

"Nah," said Adna. "Breakfast's my best meal. Bring us suthin' hearty and plenty of it. I like a nice piece of steak and fried potatoes and some griddle-cakes and maple-surrup, and if you got any nice sawsitch—and the wife usually likes some oatmeal, and she takes tea and toast, but bring me some hot bread. And the girl—What you want, Kedzie? The same's I'm takin'? All right. Oh, some grape-fruit, eh? She wants grape-fruit. Got any good? All right. I guess I'll take some grape-fruit, too; and let me see— I guess that 'll do to start on— Wait! What's that those folks are eatin' over there? Looks good—spring chicken—humm! I guess you'd like that better 'n steak, ma? Yes. She'd rather have the chicken. All right, George, you hustle us in a nice

meal and I'll make it all right with you. You understand."

Adna called all waiters "George." It saved their feelings, he had heard.

The waiter bowed and retired. Adna spoke to his family:

"Since we pay the same, anyway, might's well have the best they got."

The waiter gave the three a meal fitter for the ancient days when kings had dinner at nine in the morning than for these degenerate times when breakfast hardly lives up to its name.

The waiter and his cronies stood at a safe distance and watched the Thropps surround that banquet. They wondered where the old man got money enough to buy such breakfasts and why he didn't spend some of it on clothes.

The favorite theory was that he was a farmer on whose acres somebody had discovered oil or gold and bought him out for a million. Mr. Thropp's proper waiter hoped that he would be as extravagant with his tip as he was with his order. He feared not. His waiterly intuition told him the old man put in with more enthusiasm than he paid out.

At last the meal was over. The Thropps were groaning. They had not quite absorbed the feast, but they had wrecked it utterly. Mr. Thropp found only one omission in the perfect service. The toothpicks had to be asked for. All three Thropps wanted them.

While Thropp was fishing in his pocket for a quarter, and finding only half a dollar which he did not want to reveal, the waiter placed before him a closely written manuscript, face down, with a lead-pencil on top of it.

"What's this?" said Thropp.

"Will you please to sign your name and room number, sir?" the waiter suggested.

"Oh, I see," said Thropp, and explained to his little

flock. "You see, they got to keep tabs on the regular boarders."

Then he turned the face of the bill to the light. His pencil could hardly find a place to put his name in the long catalogue. He noted a sum scrawled in red ink: "$11.75."

"Wha-what's this?" he said, faintly.

The surprised waiter explained with all suavity: "The price of the breakfast. If it is not added correctlee—"

Thropp added it with accurate, but tremulous, pencil. The total was correct, if the items were. He explained:

"But I'm a regular—er—roomer here. I pay by the week."

"Yes, sir—if you will sign, it will be all right."

"But that don't mean they're going to charge me for breakfast? 'Levum dollars and seventy-five cents for—for breakfast?—for a small family like mine is? Well, I'd like to see 'em! What do they think I am!"

The waiter maintained his courtesy, but Adna was infuriated. He put down no tip at all. He lifted his family from the table with a yank of the eyes and snapped at the waiter:

"I'll soon find out who's tryin' to stick me—you or the propri'tor."

The old man stalked out, followed by his fat ewe and their ewe lamb. Adna's very toothpick was like a small bayonet.

His wife and daughter hung back to avoid being spattered with the gore of the unfortunate hotel clerk. The morning trains were unloading their mobs, and it was difficult to reach the desk at all.

When finally Adna got to the bar he had lost some of his running start. With somewhat weakly anger he said to the first clerk he reached:

"Looky here! I registered here last night, and another young feller was here said the two rooms would be twelve dollars."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, they sent me up to roost on a cloud, but I didn't kick. Now they're tryin' to charge me for meals extry. Don't that twelve dollars include meals?"

"Oh no, sir. The hotel is on the European plan."

Adna took the shock bravely but bitterly: "Well, all I got to say is the Europeans got mighty poor plans. I kind of suspicioned there was a ketch in it somewheres. After this we'll eat outside, and at the end of the week we'll take our custom somewheres else. Maybe there was a joke in that twelve dollars a week for the rooms, too."

"Twelve dollars a week! Oh no, sir; the charge is by the day."

Adna's knees seemed to turn to sand and run down into his shoes. He supported himself on his elbows.

"Twelve dollars a day—for those two rooms on the top of the moon?"

"Yes, sir; that's the rate, sir."

Adna was going rapidly. He chattered, "Ain't there no police in this town at tall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I've heard they're the wust robbers of all. We'll see about this." He went back to his women folk and mumbled, "Come on up-stairs."

They followed, Mrs. Thropp murmuring to Kedzie: "Looks like poppa was goin' to be sick. I'm afraid he et too much of that rich food."

The elevator flashed them to their empyrean floor. Adna did not speak till they were in their room and he had lowered himself feebly into a chair. He spoke thickly:

"Do you know what that Judas Iscariot down there is doin' to us? Chargin' us twelve dollars a day for these two cubby-holes—a day! Twelve dollars a day! Eighty-four dollars a week! And that breakfast was 'levum dollars and seventy-five cents! If I'd gave the waiter the quarter I was goin' to, it would have made an even dozen dollars! for breakfast! I don't suppose anybody would ever dast order a dinner here. Why, they'd skin a

millionaire and pick his bones in a week. We'd better get out before they slap a mortgage on my house."

"Well, I just wouldn't pay it," said Mrs. Thropp. "I'd see the police about such goings-on."

"The police!" groaned Thropp. "They're in cahoots with the burglars here. This hull town is a den of thieves. I've always heard it, and now I know it."

He was ashamed of himself for being taken in so. He began to throw into the valises the duds that had been removed.

Throughout the panic Kedzie had stood about in a kind of stupor. When her father tapped her on the shoulder and repeated his "C'm' on!" she turned to him eyes all tears glistening like bubbles, and she whimpered:

"Oh, daddy, the view! The nice things!"

Adna snapped: "View? Our next view will be the poorhouse if we don't hustle our stumps. We got to get out of here and find the cheapest place they is in town to live or go back home on the next train."

Kedzie began to cry, to cry as she had cried when she wept in her cradle because candy had been taken from her, or a box of carpet-tacks, or the scissors that she had somehow got hold of.

Adna dropped his valises with a thud. He began to upbraid her. He had endured too much. He had still his bill to pay. He told her that she was a good-for-nothin' nuisance and he wished he had left her home. He'd never take her anywheres again, you bet. Kedzie lost her reason entirely. She was shattered with spasms of grief aggravated by her mother's ferocity and her father's. She could not give up this splendor. She would not go to a cheap place to live. She would never go back home. She would rather die.

Her mother boxed her ears and shook her and scolded with all her vim. But Kedzie only shook out more sobs till they wondered what the people next door would think. Adna was wan with wrath. Kedzie was afraid of her

father's look. She had a kind of lockjaw of grief such as children suffer and suffer for.

All she would answer to her father's threats was: "I won't! I won't! I tell you I won't!"

Her cheeks were blubbered, her nose red, her mouth swollen, her hair wet and stringy. She gulped and swallowed and beat her hands together and stamped her feet.

Adna glared at her in hatred equal to her own for him. He said to his wife: "Ma, we got to go back to first principles with that girl. You got to give her a good beatin'."

Mrs. Thropp had the will but not the power. She was palsied with rage. "I can't," she faltered.

"Then I will!" said Adna, and he roared with ferocity, "Come here to me, you!"

He put out his hand like a claw, and Kedzie retreated from him. She stopped sobbing. She had never been so frightened. She felt a new kind of fright, the fright of a nun at seeing an altar threatened with desecration. She had not been whipped for years. She had grown past that. Surely her body was sacred from such infamy now.

"Come here to me, I tell you!" Adna snarled, as he pursued her slowly around the chairs.

"You better not whip me, poppa," Kedzie mumbled. "You better not touch me, I tell you. You'll be sorry if you do! You better not!"

"Come here to me!" said Adna.

"Momma, momma, don't let him!" Kedzie whispered as she ran to her mother and flung herself in her arms for refuge.

Mrs. Thropp then lost a great opportunity forever. She tore the girl's hands away and handed her over to her father. And he, with ugly fury and ugly gesture, seized the young woman who had been his child and dragged her to him and sank into a chair and wrenched and twisted her arms till he held her prone across his knees. Then he spanked her with the flat of his hand.

Kedzie made one little outcry; then there was no

sound but the thump of the blows. Adna sickened soon of his task, and Kedzie's silence and non-resistance robbed him of excuse. He growled:

"I guess that 'll learn you who's boss round here."

He thrust her from his knees, and she rolled off to the floor and lay still. She had not really swooned, but her soul had felt the need of withdrawing into itself to ponder this awful sacrilege.

CHAPTER VIII

HER mother knew that she had not fainted. She was sick, too, and blamed Kedzie for the scene. She spurned the girl with her foot and said:

"You get right up off that floor this minute. Do you hear?"

Kedzie's soul came back. It had made its decision. It gathered her body together and lifted it up to its knees and then erect, while the lips said, "All right, momma."

She groped her way into the bathroom and washed her face, and straightened her hair and came forth, a dazed and pallid thing. She took up the valise her father gave her and followed her mother out, pausing to pass her eyes about the beautiful room and the window where the peaks of splendor were. Then she walked out, and her father locked the door.

Kedzie saw that the elevator-boy saw that she had been crying, but what was one shame extra? She had no pride left now, and no father and no mother, no anybody.

Adna refused the offices of the pages who clutched at the baggage. He went to the cashier and paid the blood-money with a grin of hate. Then he gathered up his women and his other baggage and set out for the station. He would leave all the baggage there while he hunted a place to stop.

They could not find the tunnelway, but debouched on the street. Crossing Vanderbilt Avenue was a problem for village folk heavy laden. The taxicabs were hooting and scurrying.

Adna found himself in the middle of the street, entirely

surrounded by demoniac motors. His wife wanted to lie down there and die. Adna dared neither to go nor to stay. Suddenly a chauffeur of an empty limousine, fearing to lose a chance to swear at a taxi-driver, kept his head turned to the left and steered straight for the spot where the Thropps awaited their doom.

Adna had his wife pendent from one arm and a valise or two from the other. Kedzie carried a third valise. Her better than normal shoulders were sagged out of line by its weight.

When Adna saw the motor coming he had to choose between dropping his valise or his wife. Characteristically, he saved his valise.

In spite of his wife's squawking and tugging on his left arm, he achieved safety under the portico of the Grand Central Terminal. He looked about for Kedzie. She was not to be seen. Adna saw the taxicab pass over the valise she had carried. It left no trace of Kedzie. Her annihilation was uncanny. He gaped.

"Where's Kedzie?" Mrs. Thropp screamed.

A policeman checked the traffic with uplifted hand. Adna ran to him. Mrs. Thropp told him what had happened.

"I saw the goil drop the bag and beat it for the walk," said the officer.

"Which way'd she go?"

"She lost herself in the crowd," said the officer.

"She was scared out of her wits," Mrs. Thropp sobbed.

The officer shook his head. "She was smilin' when I yelled at her. It looks to me like a get-away."

"A runaway?" Mrs. Thropp gasped.

"Yes, 'm. I'd have went after her, but I was cut off by a taxi."

The two old Thropps stood staring at each other and the unfathomable New York, while the impatient chauffeurs squawked their horns in angry protest, and train-

missers with important errands thrust their heads out of cab windows.

The officer led his bewildered charges to the sidewalk, motioned the traffic to proceed, and beckoned to a patrolman. "Tell your troubles to him," he said, and went back into his private maelstrom.

The patrolman heard the Thropp story and tried to keep the crowd away. He patted Mrs. Thropp's back and said they'd find the kid easy, not to distoib herself. He told the father which station-house to go to and advised him to have the "skipper" send out a "general."

Thropp wondered what language he spoke, but he went; and a soft-hearted walrus in uniform sprawling across a lofty desk took down names and notes and minute descriptions of Kedzie and her costume. He told the two babes in the wood that such t'ings happened constant, and the goil would toin up in no time. He sent out a general alarm.

Mrs. Thropp told him the whole story, putting all the blame on her husband with such enthusiasm that the sympathy of everybody went out to him. Everybody included a number of reporters who asked Mrs. Thropp questions and particularly desired a photograph of Kedzie.

Mrs. Thropp confessed that she had not brought any along. She had never dreamed that the girl would run away. If she had have, she wouldn't have brought the girl along, to say nothing of her photograph.

The amiable walrus in the cap and brass buttons recommended the Thropps to a boarding-house whose prices were commensurate with Adna's ideas and means, and he and his wife went thither, where they told a shabby and sentimental landlady all their troubles. She reassured them as best she could, and made a cup of tea for Mrs. Thropp and told Mr. Thropp there was a young fellow lived in the house who was working for a private detective bureau. He'd find the kid sure, for it was a small woild, after all.

There was a lull in the European-war news the next day—only a few hundreds killed in an interchange of trenches. There was a dearth of big local news also. So the morning papers all gave Kedzie Thropp the hospitality of their head-lines. The illustrated journals published what they said was her photograph. No two of the photographs were alike, but they were all pretty.

The copy-writers loved the details of the event. They gave the dialogue of the Thropps in many versions, all emphasizing what is known as "the human note."

Every one of them gave due emphasis to the historic fact that Kedzie Thropp had been spanked.

The boarding-house was shaken from attic to basement by the news. The Thropps read the papers. They were astounded and enraged at gaining publicity for such a deed. They visited the walrus in his den. But there was no word of Kedzie Thropp. The sea of people had opened and swallowed the little girl. Her mother wondered where she had slept and if she were hungry and into whose hands she had fallen. But there was no answer from anywhere.

CHAPTER IX

PEOPLE who call a child in from All Outdoors and make it their infant owe it to their victim to be rich, brilliant, and generous. Kedzie Thropp's parents were poor, stupid, and stingy.

They were respectable enough, but not respectful at all. Children have more dignity than anybody else, because they have not lived long enough to have their natal dignity knocked out of them.

Kedzie's parents ought to have respected hers, but they subjected her to odious humiliation. When her father threatened to spank her—and did—and when her mother aided and abetted him, they forfeited all claim to her tolerance. The inspiration to run away was forced on Kedzie, though she would have said that her parents ran away from her first.

Kedzie had preferred her own life to the security of her valise. She dropped the bag without hesitation. When the taxicab parted her family in the middle, Kedzie ran to the opposite sidewalk. She saw a policeman dashing into the thick of the motors. Her eye caught his. He beckoned to her that he would ferry her across the torrent. He was a nice-looking man, but she shook her head at him. She smiled, however, and hastened away.

Freedom had been forced on her. Why should she relinquish the boon?

She lost herself in the crowd. She had no purpose or destination, for the whole city was a mystery to her. Soon she noted that part of the human stream flowed down into the yawning maw of a Subway kiosk as the

water ran out of the bath-tub in the hotel. She floated down the steps and found herself in a big subterrene room with walls tiled like those of the hotel bathroom. Everybody was buying tickets from a man in a funny little cage.

Kedzie had a hand-bag slung at her wrist. In it was some small money. She fished out a nickel and slid it across the glass sill as the others did.

Beneath her eyes she saw a card that asked, "How many?" She said, "One."

The doleful ticket-seller was annoyed at the tautology of passing him a nickel and saying, "One!" He shot out an angry glance with the ticket, but he melted at sight of Kedzie's lush beauty, recognized her unquestionable plebeiance, and hailed her with a "Here you are, Cutie."

Kedzie was not at all insulted. She gave him smile for smile, took up her pasteboard and followed the crowd through the gate.

The ticket-chopper yelled at the back of her head, "Here, where you goin'?"

She turned to him, and his scowl relaxed. He pointed to the box and pleaded:

"Put her there, miss, if you please."

She smiled at the ticket-chopper and dropped the flake into the box. She moved down the stairway as an express rolled in. People ran. Kedzie ran. They squeezed in at the side door, and so did Kedzie. The wicker seats were full, and so Kedzie stood. She could not reach the handles that looked like cruppers. Men and women saw how pretty she was. She was so pretty that one or two men nearly rose and offered her their seats. When the train whooped round the curve beneath Times Square Kedzie was spun into the lap of a man reading a prematurely born "Night Edition."

She came through the paper like a circus-lady, and the man was indignant till he saw what he held. Then he laughed foolishly, helped the giggling Kedzie to her feet and rose to his own, gave her his place, and went blushing

into the next car. For an hour after his arms felt as if they had clasped a fugitive nymph for a moment before she escaped.

This train chanced to be an express to 180th Street in the Bronx Borough. If any one had asked Kedzie if she knew the Bronx she would probably have answered that she did not know them. She did not even know what a borough was.

It was fascinating how much Kedzie did not know. She had an infinite fund of things to find out.

She was thrilled thoroughly by the glorious velocity through the tunnel. The train stopped at Seventy-second Street and at Ninety-sixth Street and at many other stations. People got on or off. But Kedzie was too well entertained to care to leave.

She did not know that the train ran under a corner of Central Park and beneath the Harlem River. She would have liked to know. To run under a river would tell well at home.

Suddenly the Subway shot out into midair and became a superway. The street which had been invisible above was suddenly visible below, with street-cars on it. Also there was a still higher track overhead. Three layers of tracks! It was heavenly, the noise they made! She enjoyed hearing the mounting numbers of the streets shouted antiphonally by the gentlemen at either door.

At 180th Street, however, the train stopped for good, and the handsome young man at the front door called, "All out!" He said it to Kedzie with a beautiful courtesy, adding, "This is as far as we go, lady."

That was tremendous, to be called "lady." Kedzie tried to get out like one. She smiled at the guard and left his protection with some reluctance. He studied her as she walked along the platform. She seemed to meet with his approval in general, and in particular. He sighed when she turned out of his sight.

The station here was very high up in the world. Kedzie

counted seventy-seven steps on her way to the level. She was distressed to find herself in a shabby, noisy community where streets radiated in six directions. Her fears were true. She had left New York. She must get home to it again.

She walked back along the way she had come, on the sidewalk beneath the tracks. This meandering street was called Boston Road. Kedzie had no ideas as to the distance of Boston. She only knew that New York was good enough for her—the New York of Forty-second Street, of course. Kedzie did not know yet how many, many New Yorks there are in New York.

She was discouraged by her present surroundings. Along the rough and neglected streets were little rows of shanty shops, and there were stubby frame residences.

There was one two-story cottage snuggling against a hill; it had a little picket fence with a little picket gate leading to a little ragged yard with an old apple-tree in it; and there was a pair of steps up to the front door, and a rough trellis from there to the woodshed with a grapevine draped across it. It was of the James Whitcomb Riley school of architecture—a house with a woodshed.

Rich people who were tired of the city, and chanced that way, used to pause and look at that little nook and admire its meek attractiveness. It made them homesick.

But Kedzie was sick of home. This lowly cot was too much like her father's. It had a sign on it that said, "To Let." It was a funny expression. Kedzie studied it a long time before she decided that it was New-Yorkese for "For Rent."

She shuddered at the idea of renting or letting such a house—especially as it was so close to a church, a small, seedy, frame church nearly all roof, a narrow-chested, slope-shouldered churchlet with a frame cupola for a steeple. It looked abandoned, and an ivy flourished on it so impudently that it almost closed the unfrequented portal.

The bill-boards here made mighty interesting reading. There were magnificent works of an art on the grand scale of a people's gallery; one structure promulgated the glories of a notorious chewing-gum. There was a gorgeous proclamation of a fashionable glove with a picture of an extremely swell slim lady all dressed up—or rather all dressed down—for the opera.

Kedzie prayed the Lord to send her some day a pair of full-length white kid gloves like those. As for a box at the opera, she would take her chances on the sunniest cloud-sofa in heaven for an evening at the opera. And for a dress cut deckolett and an aigret in her hair, she would have swapped a halo and a set of wings.

There was no end to the big pages of this literature, and Kedzie read dozens of them from right to left in a southerly direction. Finally she abandoned the Boston Road and walked over to a better-groomed avenue with more of a city atmosphere.

But she saw a police signal-station at 175th Street, and she thought it better to abandon the Southern Boulevard. She was not sure of her police yet, and she had an uneasy feeling that her father and mother were at that moment telling their troubles to some policeman who would shortly be putting her description in the hands of detectives. She did not want to be arrested. Poppa might try to spank her again. She did not want to have to murder anybody, especially her parents. She liked them better when she was away from them.

She hated to waste five cents on a street-car, but finally she achieved the extravagance. The car went sliding and grinding through an amazing amount of paved street, with an inconceivable succession of apartment-houses and shops.

At length she reached a center of what she most desired —noise and mob and hurry. At 164th Street she came to a star of streets where the Third Avenue Elevated collaborated with the surface-cars and the loose traffic to create a

delicious pandemonium. She loved those high numbers—a hundred and eighty streets! Beautiful! At home Main Street dissolved into pastures at Tenth Street.

She wanted to find Main Street in New York and see what First Street looked like. It was probably along the Atlantic Ocean. That also was one of the things she must see—her first ocean!

But while Kedzie was reveling in the splendors of 164th Street her eye was caught by the gaudy placards of a moving-picture emporium. There was a movie-palace at home. It was the town's one metropolitan charm.

There was a lithograph here that reached out and caught her like a bale-hook. It represented an impossibly large-eyed girl, cowering behind a door on whose other side stood a handsome devil in evening dress. He was tugging villainously at a wicked mustache, and his eyes were thrillingly leery. Behind a curtain stood a young man who held a revolver and waited. The title of the picture decided Kedzie. It was "The Vampire's Victim; a Scathing Exposure of High Society."

Kedzie studied hard. For all her gipsy wildness, she had a trace of her father's parsimony, and she hated to spend money that was her very own. Some of the dimes and quarters in that little purse had been there for ages. Besides, her treasury would have to sustain her for an indefinite period.

But she wanted to know about high society. She was not sure what *scathing* meant, or what the pronunciation of it was. She rather inclined to "*scat-ting*." Anyway, it looked important.

She stumbled into the black theater and found a seat among mysterious persons dully silhouetted against the screen. This was none of the latter-day temples where moving pictures are run through with cathedral solemnity, soft lights, flowers, orchestral uplift, and nearly classic song. This was a dismal little tunnel with one end lighted by the twinkling pictures. Tired mothers came here to escape

from their children, and children came here to escape from their tired mothers. The plots of the pictures were as trite and as rancid as spoiled meat, but they suited the market. This plot concerned a beautiful girl who came to the city from a small town. She was a good girl, because she came from a small town and had poor parents.

She was dazzled a little, however, by the attentions of a swell devil of great wealth, and she neglected her poor—therefore honest—lover temporarily. She learned the fearful joys of a limousined life, and was lured into a false marriage which nearly proved her ruin. The villain got a fellow-demon to pretend to be a minister, put on false hair, reverse his collar, and read the wedding ceremony; and the heroine was taken to the rich man's home.

The rooms were as full of furniture as a furniture-store, and so Kedzie knew it was a swell home. Also there was a butler who walked and acted like a wooden man.

The heroine was becomingly shy of her husband, but finally went to her room, where a swell maid put her to bed (with a proper omission of critical moments) in a bed that must have cost a million dollars. Some womanly, though welching, intuition led the bride to lock her door. Some manly intuition led the hero to enter the gardens and climb in through a window into the house. If he had not been a hero it would have been a rather reprehensible act. But to the heroes all things are pure. He prowled through the house heroically without attracting attention. Every step of his burglarious progress was applauded by the audience.

The hero hid behind one of those numberless portières that hang everywhere in the homes of the *moveaux riches*, and waited with drawn revolver for the dastard bridegroom to attempt his hellish purpose.

The locked door thwarted the villain for the time, and he decided to wait till he got the girl aboard one of those yachts which rich people keep for evil purposes. Thus the villain unwittingly saved the hero from the painful neces-

sity of committing murder, and added another reel to the picture.

It is not necessary and it might infringe a copyright to tell the rest of the story. It would be insulting to say that the false minister, repenting, told the hero, who told the heroine after he rescued her from the satanic yacht and various other temptations. Of course she married the plain-clothes man and lived happily ever after in a sin-proof cottage with a garden of virtuous roses.

Kedzie was so excited that she annoyed the people about her, but she learned again the invaluable lesson that rich men are unfit companions for nice girls. Kedzie resolved to prove this for herself. She prayed for a chance to be tempted so that she might rebuke some swell villain. But she intended to postpone the rebuke until she had seen a lot of high life. This would serve a double purpose: Kedzie would get to see more millionairishness, and the rebuke would be more—more "*scatting.*" It is hard even to think a word you cannot pronounce.

Kedzie gained one thing further from the pictures—a new name. She had been musing incessantly on choosing one. She had always hated both *Thropp* and *Kedzie*, and had counted on marriage to reform her surname. But she could not wait. She wanted an alias at once. The police were after her. The heroine of this picture was named *Anita Adair*, and the name just suited Kedzie. She intended to be known by it henceforth.

She had not settled on what town she had come from. Perhaps she would decide to have been born in New York. She rather fancied the notion of being a daughter of a terrible swell family who wanted to force her to marry a wicked old nobleman, but she ran away sooner than submit to the "*imfany*"—that was the way Kedzie pronounced it in her head. It was a word she had often seen but never heard.

Meanwhile she was sure of one thing: Kedzie Thropp was annihilated and Anita Adair was born full grown.

At the conclusion of the film Kedzie was saddened by a ballad sung by an adenoid tenor. The song was a scatting exposure of the wickedness of Broadway. The refrain touched Kedzie deeply, and alarmed her somewhat. It reiterated and reiterated:

"There's a browkin hawt for everee light ton Broadway-ee."

Kedzie began to fear that she would furnish one more. And yet it would be rather nice to have a broken heart, Kedzie thought, especially on Broadway.

CHAPTER X

KEDZIE watched the moving picture twice through. The second time it was not so good. It lacked spontaneity and sincerity.

At the first vision everything seemed to rise from what preceded; people did what was natural or noble. The second time it looked mechanical, rehearsed; the thrill was gone, too, because she knew positively that the hero was not really going to shoot, and the villain was not really going to break through the door.

She wandered forth in a tragedy of disillusionment. That was really the cause of the pout that seemed to say, "Please kiss me!" She pouted because when she got what she wanted she no longer wanted it.

There are hearts like cold storage. They keep what they get fresh and cool; and there are hearts that spoil whatever is intrusted to them. In Kedzie's hot young soul, things spoiled soon.

She was hungry, and she could not resist the impulse to enter a cheap restaurant. She did not know how cheap it was. It was as good as the best restaurant in Nimrim, Mo.

Kedzie ordered unfamiliar things for the sake of educating her illiterate mid-Western stomach. She ordered clam chowder and Hamburger steak, spaghetti Italienne, lobster salad, and Neapolitan ice-cream. She ate too much —much too much.

The total bill was ninety-five cents, and she was terrified. She had thought her father a miser for complaining of the breakfast bill of eleven-odd dollars at the Biltmore, but that was his money, not hers.

When she finished her meal she did not dream of tipping the waiter. He seemed not to expect it, but he grinned as he asked her to come again. He hoped she would. He went to the door and stared after her, sadly, longingly. The dishes she had left he carried away with an elegiac solemnity.

The streets were darkened now and the lights bewildered Kedzie. The town grew more solemn. It withdrew into itself. People were going home.

Kedzie did not know where to go. She walked for fear of standing still. The noise fatigued her. She turned west to escape it and found a little park at 161st Street.

Many streets flowed thence. There were ten ways to follow, and she could not choose one among them.

She was pretty, but she had not learned the commercial value of her beauty. She was alone in the great, vicious city, but nobody had threatened her. Nearly everybody had paid her charm the tribute of a stare or a smile, but nobody had been polite enough to flatter her with a menace.

She was very pretty. But then there are so very many very pretty girls in every big city! June with her millions of exquisite roses is no richer in beauty than New York. Yet even New York cannot keep all her beauties supplied with temptation and peril all the time.

Kedzie sat on the bench wondering which of the ten ways to go. It turned late, but she could not decide. She began to be a little hungry again, but she was always that, and she told her ever-willing young stomach that her late luncheon would have to be an early dinner.

As she sat still, people began to peer at her through the enveiling dark. A tipsy brewery truck-driver who had absorbed too much of his own cargo sank down by her side. He could not see Kedzie through the froth in his brain, but she found him fearful. When he began to talk to himself she fled.

She saw a brilliantly lighted street-car, and she boarded

it. She was all turned around, and the car twisted and turned as it proceeded. She did not realize that it was going north till she heard the conductor calling in higher and higher street numbers. Then she understood, with tired wrath, that she was outbound once more. She wanted to go toward the heart of town, but she could not afford to get off without her nickel's worth of ride.

The car was all but empty when the conductor called to a drowsy old lady, his penultimate passenger:

"Hunneran Semty-seckin! Hey, lady! You ast me to leave you off at Hunneran Semty-seckin, didn't yah?"

The woman was startled from her reverie and gasped:

"Dear me! is this a Hundred and Seventy-second?"

"Thass wat I said, didn't I?"

She evicted herself with a manner of apology for intruding on the conductor's attention.

Now Kedzie was alone with the man. His coyote bark changed to an insinuating murmur. He sat down near Kedzie, took up an abandoned evening paper, and said:

"Goin' all the way, Cutie, or how about it?"

"I'm get'n' off here!" said Kedzie, with royal scorn. She resented his familiarity, and she was afraid that he was going to prove dangerous. Perhaps he meant to abduct her in this chariot.

Being a street-car conductor, the poor fellow neither understood women nor was understood by them. He accepted Kedzie's blow with resignation. He helped her down the step, his hand mellowing her arm and finding it ripe.

She flung him a rebukeful glare that he did not get. He gave the two bells, and the car went away like a big lamp, leaving the world to darkness and to Kedzie.

She walked for a block or two and wondered where she should sleep. There were no hotels up here, and she would have been afraid of their prices. Probably they all charged as much as the Biltmore. At that rate, her

money would just about pay for the privilege of walking in and out again.

Boarding-houses there might have been, but they bore no distinguishing marks.

Kedzie stood and strolled until she was completely fagged. Then she encountered a huge mass of shadowy foliage, a park—Crotona Park, although of course Kedzie did not know its name.

There were benches at the edge, and concreted paths went glimmering among vagueness of foliage, with here and there searing arc-lights as bright as immediate moons. Kedzie dropped to the first bench, but a couple of lovers next to her protested, and she retreated into the park a little.

She felt a trifle chilled with weariness and discouragement and the lack of light. She clasped her arms together as a kind of wrap and huddled herself close to herself. Her head teetered and tottered and gradually sank till her delicate chin rested in her delicate bosom. Her big hat shaded her face as in a deep blot of ink, and she slept.

Unprotected, pretty, alone in the wicked city, she slept secure and unassailed.

CHAPTER XI

MISS ANITA ADAIR (*née* Kedzie Thropp) had dozed upon her cozy park bench for an uncertain while when her bedroom was invaded by visitors who did not know she was there.

Kedzie was wakened by murmurous voices. A man was talking to a woman. They might have been Romeo and Juliet in Verona for the poetry of their grief, but they were in the Bronx Borough, and he was valet and she a housemaid, or so Kedzie judged. The man was saying in a dialect new to Kedzie:

"Ah, *ma pauvre p'tite amie*, for why you have a *jalousie* of my *patrie*?"

There was a vague discussion from which Kedzie drowsily gleaned that the man was going to cross the sea to the realm of destruction. The girl was jealous of somebody that he called his *patrie*, and he miserably endeavored to persuade her that a man could love both his *patrie* and his *amie*, and yet give his life to the former at her call.

Kedzie was too sleepy to feel much curiosity. A neighbor's woe is a soothing lullaby. In the very crisis of their debate, the little moan of Kedzie's yawn startled and silenced the farewellers. They stole away unseen, and she knew no more of them.

Hours later Kedzie woke, shivering and afraid. All about her was a woodland hush, but the circle of the horizon was dimly lighted, as if there were houses on fire everywhere in the distance.

Poor Kedzie was a-cold and filled with the night dread. She was afraid of burglars, mice, ghosts. She was still

more afraid to leave her bench and hunt through those deep shadows for her lost New York. Her drugged brain fell asleep as it wrestled with its fears. Her body protested at its couch. All her limbs like separate serpents tried to find resting-places. They could not stretch themselves out on the bench. Fiends had placed cast-iron braces at intervals to prevent people from doing just that. Kedzie did not know that it is against the law of New York, if not of Nature, to sleep on park benches.

Half unconsciously she slipped down to the ground and found a bed on the warm and dewless grass. Her members wriggled and adjusted themselves. Her head rolled over on one round arm for a pillow; the other arm bent itself above her head, and finding her hat in the way, took out the pins, lifted the hat off, set it on the ground, put the pins back in and returned to its place about her hair—all without disturbing Kedzie's beauty sleep.

Her two arms were all the maids that Kedzie had ever had. They were as kind to her as they could be—devoted almost exclusively to her comfort.

CHAPTER XII

KEDZIE slept alone in a meadow, and slept well. Youth spread the sward with mattresses of eider-down, and curtained out the stars with silken tapestry. If she dreamed at all, it was with the full franchise of youth in the realm of ambition. If she dreamed herself a great lady, then fancy promised her no more than truth should redeem. Charity Coe Cheever had a finer bed but a poorer sleep, if any at all. She had a secretary to do her chores for her and to tell her her engagements—where she was to go and what she had promised and what she had better do. Charity dictated letters and committee reports; she even dictated checks on her bank-account (which kept filling up faster than she drew from it).

While Kedzie was trying to fit her limber frame among the little hillocks and tussocks on the ground, Charity Coe was sitting at her dressing-table, gazing into the mirror, but seeing beyond her own image. Her lips moved, and her secretary wrote down what she said aloud, and her maid was kneeling to take off Charity Coe's ballroom slippers and slip on her bedroom ditto. The secretary was so sleepy that she tried to keep her eyes open by agitating the lids violently. The maid was trying to keep from falling forward across her mistress's insteps and sleeping there.

But Charity was wide-awake—wild awake. Her soul was not in her dictation, but in her features, which she studied in the mirror as a rich man studies his bank-account. Charity was wondering if she had wrecked her beauty beyond repair, or if she could fight it back.

Charity Coe, being very rich, had a hundred arms and

hands and feet, eyes and ears, while Kedzie had but two of each. Charity had some one to make her clothes for her and cut up her bread and meat and fetch the wood for her fire and put her shoes on and take them off. She even had her face washed for her and her hair brushed, and somebody trimmed her finger-nails and swept out her room, sewed on her buttons and buttoned them up or unbuttoned them, as she pleased.

If Kedzie had known how much Charity was having done for her she would have had a colic of envy. But she slept while Charity could not. Charity could not pay anybody to sleep for her or stay awake for her, or love or kiss for her, and her wealth could not buy the fidelity of the one man whose fidelity she wanted to own.

Charity had done work that Kedzie would have flinched from. Charity had lived in a field hospital and roughed it to a loathsome degree. She had washed the faces and bodies of grimy soldiers from the bloody ditches of the war-front; she had been chambermaid to gas-blinded peasants and had done the hideous chores that follow operations. Now with a maid to change her slippers and a secretary to make up her mind, and a score of servants within call, she was afraid that she had squandered her substance in spendthrift alms. She was a prodigal benefactress returned from her good works too late, perhaps. She wondered and took stock of her charms. She rather underrated them.

Peter Cheever had been extravagantly gallant the morning after her return from the mountains. He had added the last perfect tribute of suspicion and jealousy. They had even breakfasted together. She had dragged herself down to the dining-room, and he had neglected his morning paper, and lingered for mere chatter. He had telephoned from his office to ask her for the noon hour, too. He had taken her to the Bankers' Club for luncheon in the big Blue Room. He had then suggested that they dine together and go to any theater she liked.

Charity Coe's head was turned by all this attention. "Three meals a day and a show with her own husband" was going the honeymoon pace.

But she returned to the normal speed, for he did not come home to dress or to dine or to go to the theater. No word came from him until Charity Coe was all dressed; then a clerk telephoned her that her husband regretted he could not come home, as he had to rush for the Philadelphia train.

Charity could not quite disbelieve this, nor quite believe. She had spent the evening debating married love and honeymoons that wax and wane and wax again, and a wife's duty and her rights and might-have-beens, perhapses, and if-only's.

Charity had put on her jewels, which had not been taken out of the safe for years, but he had not arrived. Alarm and resentment wrestled for her heart; they prospered alternately. Now she trembled with fear for her husband; now she smothered with wrath at his indifference to her.

Who was he that he should keep her waiting, and who were the Cheevers that they should break engagements with the Coes? It was only at such times that her pride of birth flared in her, and then only enough to sustain her through grievous humiliations.

But what are humiliations that we should mind them so? They come to everybody in turn, and they are as relentless and impersonal as the sun marching around the sky. Kedzie had hers, and Charity hers, and the street-car conductor Kedzie had rebuffed had his, and the Czar with his driven army had his, with more to come, and the Kaiser with his victorious army had his, with more to come. Even Peter Cheever had his in plenty, and of a peculiar secret sort.

He had honestly planned to spend his evening with his wife. She seemed to be coming back into style with him. But the long arm of the telephone brought him within the

reach of Zada L'Etoile. Zada had plans of her own for his evening—dinner, theater, supper, dance till dawn. Peter had answered, gently:

"Sorry, but I'm booked."

Zada had seemed to come right through the wire at him.

"With that —— wife of yours, of course!"

She had used a word that fascinated the listening Central, who was lucky enough to transact a good deal of Zada's telephone business. Central could almost see Peter flush as he shook his head and answered:

"Not necessarily. It's business."

"You'd better make it your business not to go out with that woman, anywhere," Zada had threatened. "It's indecent."

Peter winced. A wife is not ordinarily called "that woman." Peter sighed. It was a pretty pass when a man could not be allowed to go to the theater with his own wife. Yet he felt that Zada was right, in a way. He had forfeited the privilege of a domestic evening. He was afraid to brave Zada's fantastic rages. He could best protect Charity Coe by continuing to ignore her.

He consented to Zada's plan and promised to call up his wife. Zada took a brief triumph from that. But Peter was ashamed and afraid to speak to Charity even across the wire. He knew that it has become as difficult to lie by telephone as face to face. The treacherous little quavers in the voice are multiplied to a rattle, and nothing can ever quite imitate sincerity. So much is bound to be over or under done.

Cheever made a pretense of rushing out of his office. He looked at his watch violently, so that his secretary should be startled—as he politely pretended to be. Cheever gasped, then rushed his lie with sickly histrionism:

"I say, Hudspeth, call up my—Mrs. Cheever, will you? And—er—tell her I've had to dash for the train to—er—Phila"—cough—"delphia. Tell her I'm awfully sorry about to-night. Back to-morrow."

"Yessir," said Hudspeth, winking at the gaping stenographer, who looked exclamation points at her typewriter.

Hudspeth called up Mrs. Cheever. He was no more convincing than Cheever would have been. A note of disgust at his task and of deprecatory pity for Mrs. Cheever influenced his tone.

Charity was not convinced, but she could hardly reveal that to Hudspeth—although, of course, she did. She was betrayed by her very eagerness to be a good sport easily bamboozled.

"Oh, I see. Too bad! I quite understand. Thank you, Mr. Hudspeth. Good-by."

She did not hear Hudspeth growling to the stenographer as he strolled over and leaned on her chair unnecessarily—there were other chairs to lean on, and she was not deaf:

"Rotten business! He ought to be ashamed of himself. A nice wife like that!"

The stenographer sat forward and snapped, "You got a nice wife yourself." She was a little jealous of Zada, perhaps—or of Mrs. Cheever—or of both.

Peter left his office to escape telephoning Charity, but he could imagine how the message crushed her. He felt as if he had stepped on a hurt bird. When he met Zada he kept trying to be patient and forgiving with her, in spite of her blameworthiness.

Zada saw through his sullenness, and for a little moment was proud of her victory. Then she began to suffer, too. She understood the frailty of her hold on Cheever. His loyalty to her was in the eyes of the world a treachery, and his disloyalty to her would be applauded as a holy deed. She was becoming an old story with him, as Charity had become one.

She suffered agonies from the cloud on her title and on her name, and she was afraid of the world. A woman of her sort has no sympathy to expect; her stock in trade vanishes without replenishment, and her business does not build. In spite of herself she cannot help envying and

imitating the good women. As a certain great man has confessed, "There is so much good in the worst of us," that there is hardly any fun in being bad. It is almost impossible to be very bad or very good very long at a time.

So here was Zada already copying a virtuous domestic woe and wondering how she could fasten Cheever to her, win him truly for herself. She honestly felt that she could be of value to him, and make more of a man of him than his lawful wife ever could. Perhaps she was right. At any rate, she was miserable, and if a person is going to be miserable she might as well be right while her misery is going on.

Zada had dragged Cheever to a cabaret. She could lead him thither, but she could not make him dance. She was one-stepping unwillingly with a young cad who insulted her subtly in everything he said and looked. She could not resent his familiarity beyond sneering at him and calling him a foolish cub. She left him and returned to the table where Peter Cheever smoked a bitter cigar. It is astonishing how sad these notorious revelers look in repose. They are solemner than deacons.

"Come on, Peterkin—dance the rest of this with me," Zada implored.

Peterkin shook his head. He felt that it was not quite right for him to dance in public with such persons. He had his code. Even the swine have their ethics. Zada put her hand in Cheever's arm and cooed to him, but in vain.

It was then that Jim Dyckman caught sight of them. He was slinking about the roofs as lonely and dejected as a homeless cat.

His money could not buy him companionship, though his acquaintance was innumerable and almost anybody would have been proud to be spoken to by such a money monster. But Jim did not want to be spoken to by anybody who was ambitious to be spoken to by him. He wanted to talk to Charity.

He could not even interest himself in dissipation. There was plenty of it for sale, and markets were open to him that were not available to average means. Many a foolish woman, irreproachable and counting herself unapproachable, would have been strangely and memorably perturbed by an amorous glance from Jim Dyckman.

But Jim did not want what he could get. He was hungry for the companionship of Charity Coe.

When he saw her lord and master, Peter Cheever, with Zada, Dyckman was enraged. Cheever owned Charity Coe; he could flatter her with a smile, beckon her with a gesture, caress her at will, or leave her in safe deposit, while he spent his precious hours with a public servant!

Dyckman could usually afford to do what he wanted to. But now he wanted to go to that table and knock the heads of Cheever and Zada together; he wanted to make their skulls whack like castanets. But he could not afford to do that.

He was so forlorn that he went home. His sumptuous chariot with ninety race-horses concealed in the engine and velvet in its wheels slid him as on smoothest ice to his father's home near the cathedral. The house was like a child of the cathedral, and he went up its steps as a pauper entering a cathedral. He gave up his hat and stick and went past the masterpieces on his walls as if he were a visitor to the Metropolitan Art Gallery on a free day. He stumbled up the stairway, itself a work of art, like a boy sent to bed without supper: he stumbled upstairs, wanting to cry and not daring to.

His valet undressed him in a motherly way and put him to bed. The valet was feeling very sad. Dyckman realized that he was about to lose Jules, and he felt more disconsolate. Still, he surprised himself by breaking out:

"I wish you wouldn't go to the war, Jules."

Jules smiled with friendship and deference subtly blended:

"I wish I would not, too, sir."

"You might get killed, you know."

"Yes, sir."

"So you're a soldier! How long did you serve?"

"Shree years, sir."

"And I don't know the first thing about soldiering! I ought to be ashamed of myself! Well—don't get killed, Jules."

"Very good, sir."

But he did.

Jules said, "Good night, sir," and faded through the door. Dyckman tossed for a while. Then he got up in a rage at his insomnia. He could not find his other slipper, and he stubbed his toe plebeianly against an aristocratic table. He cursed and limped to the window and glowered down into the street. He might have been a jailbird gaping through iron bars. He could not get out of himself, or his love for Charity.

He wondered how he could live till morning without her. He went to his telephone to call her and hear her voice. He lifted the receiver and when Central answered, the cowardice of decency compelled him from his resolve, and he shamefully mumbled:

"The correct time, please."

What difference did it make to him what hour it was? He was the victim of eternity, not time.

He went back to his window-vigil over nothing and fell asleep murmuring the biggest swear words he could remember. In his weak mood they had the effect of a spanked boy's last whimpers.

He was a boy, and fate was spanking him hard. He could not have whom he wanted, and he resolved that there was nothing else in the world to want. And all the time there was a girl sleeping out in Crotona Park on the ground. She was pretty and dangerous, another flower tossing on the girl-tree.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN the daylight whitened the black air it found Dyckman sprawled along his window-lounge and woke him to the disgust of another morning. He had to reach up and draw a curtain between his eyes and the hateful sun.

But Kedzie had only her vigilant arm. It slipped down across her brow like a watchful nurse coming in on tip-toe to protect a fretful patient from broken sleep.

Kedzie slept on and on, till at length the section of Crotona Park immediately beneath her refused to adapt itself longer to her squirming search for soft spots. She sat up in startled confusion at the unfamiliar ceiling. The wall-paper was not at all what she always woke to. At first she guessed that she must have fallen out of bed with a vengeance. Then she decided she had fallen out of doors and windows as well, and into the front yard.

No, these bushes were not those bushes. That beech almost overhead, seen from below by sleep-thick eyes, was an amazing thing.

She had drowsy childhood memories of being carried up-stairs by her father and put to bed by her mother. Once or twice she had wakened with her head to the foot-board and endured agonies of confusion before she got the universe turned round right. But how had she got out-doors? Her father had never carried her down-stairs and left her in the yard before.

At last she saw that she had fallen not merely out of bed and out of doors, but out of town. She remembered

her wanderings and her lying down to sleep. She wondered who had taken her hat off for her.

She looked about for somebody to ask questions of. There was nobody to be seen. There were a few housetops peering over the horizon at her.

English sparrows were jumping here and there, engaged in their everlasting spats, but she could not ask them.

Kedzie sat up straight, her arms back of her, her feet erect on their heels at a distance, like suspicious squirrels. She yawned against the back of her wrist and began to remember her escapade. She gurgled with laughter, but she felt rumpled and lame, and not in the least like Miss Anita Adair. She almost wished she were at home, gazing from her bed to the washstand and hearing her mother puttering about in the kitchen making breakfast; to Kedzie's young heart it was the superlative human luxury to know you ought to get up and not get up.

She clambered to her feet and made what toilet she could while her seclusion lasted. She shook out her skirts like feathers, and shoved her disheveled hair up under her hat as she had always swept the dust under the rug.

She was overjoyed to find that her hand-bag had not been stolen. The powder-puff would serve temporarily for a wash-basin. The small change in her purse would postpone starvation or surrender for a while.

She walked out of her sleeping-porch to the path. A few people were visible now—workmen and workwomen taking a short-cut, and leisurely gentlemen out of a job already beginning their day's work of holding down benches. No one asked any questions or showed any interest in Kedzie.

She found a street-car line, made sure that the car she took was bound down-town, and resumed her effort to recapture New York.

Nearly everybody was reading one morning paper or another, but Kedzie was not interested in the news.

One man kept brushing her nose with his paper. She was angry at his absence of mind, but she did not notice that her nose was being annoyed by her own name in the head-lines.

She rode and rode and rode till her hunger distracted her. She passed restaurant after restaurant, till at last she could stand the famine no longer. She got down from the car and walked till she came to a bakery lunch-room entitled, "The Bon-Ton Bakery by Joe Gidden." It was another like the one she ate in the day before. The same kind of waiter was there, a dish-thrower with the manners of a hostler.

But Kedzie was so meek after her night on the ground that she was flattered by his grin. "Skip" Magruder was his title, as she learned in time. The "Skip" came to him from a curious impediment in his gait that caused him to drop a stitch now and then.

Not long afterward Kedzie was so far beyond this poor hamstrung stable-soul that she could not hear the word *skip* without blushing as if it were an indecency. It was an indecency, too, that such a little Aphrodite should be reduced to a love-affair with such a dismal Vulcan. But if it could happen on Olympus, it could happen on earth.

Proximity is said to breed love, but priority has its virtues no less. Skip Magruder was the first New-Yorker to help Kedzie in her hour of dismay, and she thought him a great and powerful being profoundly informed about the city of her dreams.

Skip did know a thing or two—possibly three. He was a New-Yorker of a sort, and he had his New York as well as Jim Dyckman had his or Peter Cheever his. He sized Kedzie up for the ignoramus she was, but he was good to her in so far as his skippy faculties permitted. He dropped the paper he was reading when she wandered in, and won her at once by not calling her "Cutie."

"W'at 'll y'ave, lady?" he said as he skirled a plate and a glass of ice-water along the oil-cloth with exquisite skill,

slapped a knife and fork and spoon alongside, and flipped her a check to be punched as she ordered, and a fly-frequented bill of fare to order from.

Kedzie was stumped by the array of dishes. Skip volunteered his aid—suggested "A nor'nge, ham 'n'eggs, a plate o' wheats, anna cuppa corfee."

"All right," said Kedzie, wondering how much such a barbecue would cost.

Skip went to bellow the order through a sliding door and grab it when it should be pushed forth from a mysterious realm. Kedzie picked up a newspaper that Skip had picked up after some early client left it.

Kedzie glanced at the front page and saw that the Germans had taken three towns and the Allies one trench. She could not pronounce the towns, and trenches meant nothing in her life. She was about to toss the paper aside when a head-line caught her eye. She read with pardonable astonishment:

SPANKED GIRL GONE

Beautiful Kedzie Thropp, Western Society Belle, Deserts Her Wealthy Parents at Biltmore and Vanishes

Police of Nation in Search

Kedzie felt the world blow up about her. Her name was in the New York papers the second morning of her first visit! Her father and mother were called wealthy! She was a society belle! Who could ever hereafter deny these ideal splendors, now that there had been a piece in the paper about them?

But dog on it! Why did they have to go and do such a thing as put in about her being spanked? She blushed all over with rage. She had once planned to go back home with wondrous gossip of her visit to the big city. She had seen herself gloating over the other girls who had never been to a big city.

Now they would all give her the laugh. The boys

would make up rhymes and yell them at her from a safe distance. She could kill her father for being so mean to her. It was bad enough to hurt her as he did, but to go and tattle when her back was turned was simply awful. She could never go home now. She'd rather die.

Yet the paper said the police of the nation were searching for her. She understood how Eliza felt with the bloodhounds after her. She must keep out of sight of the police. One good thing was the picture of her that they printed in the paper. It was not her picture at all, and nothing like her. Besides, she had selected a new name. "Anita Adair" was a fine disguise. It sounded awful swell, too. It sounded like her folks had money. She was glad to be rid of "Kedzie Thropp." She would never be Kedzie Thropp again.

Then the waiter came with her breakfast. It smelled so grand that she forgot to be afraid for a while. The coffee smoked aroma; the ham and eggs were fragrant; and the orange sent up a golden fume of delight.

Skip entered into conversation as she entered into the orange. "Where you woikin' now?" he said.

Kedzie did not know what his dialect meant at first. When she learned that "woikin'" was the same as "wurrkin'" she confessed that she had no job. She trembled lest he should recognize her from the paper. He eyed her narrowly and tried to flirt with her across the very head-lines that told who she was.

She could not be sure that he did not know her. He might be a detective in disguise looking for a reward.

Skip had been reading about Kedzie when she came in. But he never dreamed that she was she. He befriended her, however, out of the goodness of his heart and the desire to retain her in the neighborhood—also out of respect for the good old brass rule, "Do good unto others now, so that they will do good to you later."

Skip told Kedzie that he knew a place right near where a goil was wanted. When he told her that it was

a candy-store she was elated. A candy-store was her idea of a good place to work.

Skip told Kedzie where to go and what to say, and to mention that Skip sent her.

Skip also recommended lodgings next his own in the flat of Mr. and Mrs. Rietzvoller, delicatessen merchants.

"Nice rooms reasonable," he said, "and I'll be near to look after you."

"You're awful fresh, seems to me, on short acquaintance," was Kedzie's stinging rebuke.

Skip laughed. "Didn't you see the special-delivery stamp on me forehead? But I guess you're a goil can take care yourself."

Kedzie guessed she was. But she was in need of help. Where else could she turn? Whom else had she for a beau in this multitude of strangers? So she laughed encouragingly.

"All right. You're elected. Gimme the address."

Skip wrote it on one of the business cards of the bakery. He added:

"Another thing: I know a good expressman will rustle your trunk over from— Where you boardin' at now?"

Kedzie flushed. She could hardly tell him that she had boarded in a park up-town somewhere.

Skip saw that she was confused. He showed exquisite tact.

"I'm wise, goilie. She's holdin' your trunk out on you. I been in the same boat m'self."

Kedzie was willing to let it go at that, but Skip pondered:

"But, say—that ain't goin' to make such a hell of a hit—scuse me, lady—but I mean if you tell your new landlady about your trunk bein' left on your old one, that ain't goin' to get you nothin' but the door-slam in the snoot. . . . I tell you: tell her you just come in on the train and your wardrobe-trunk is on the way unless it got delayed in changin' cars at—oh, any old place. I guess you did

come in, at that, from Buffalo or Pittsboig or some them Western joints, didn' you?"

Kedzie just looked at him. Her big eyes lied for her, and he hastened to say:

"Well, scuse me nosin' in on your own business. Tell the landlady what you want to, only tell her it was me sent you. That's as good as a guarantee—that she'll have to wait for her money."

Kedzie laughed at his excruciating wit, but she was touched also by his courtesy, and she told him he was awful kind and she was terrible obliged.

That bowled him over. But when she rose with stateliness and, reaching for her money, offered to pay, he had the presence of mind to snarl, amiably:

"Ah, ferget it and beat it. This meal's on me, and wishing you many happy returns of the same."

He certainly was one grand gentleman. The proprietor was away, and Skip could afford to be generous.

Kedzie left him and found the landlady and got a home; and then she found the store and got a job. For a time she was in Eden. The doleful proprietor's doleful wife was usually down-cellar making ice-cream while her husband was out in the kitchen cooking candy. Kedzie was free to guzzle soda-water at her will. Her forefinger and thumb went along the stacks of candy, dipping like a robin's beak. She was forever licking her fingers and brushing marshmallow dust off her chest. She usually had a large, square caramel outlined in one round cheek.

But the ecstasy did not abide. Kedzie began to realize why Mr. and Mrs. Fleissig were sad. Sweets were a sour business; the people who came into the shop were mainly children who spent whole half-hours choosing a cent's worth of burnt sugar, or young, foolish girls who giggled into the soda bubbles, or housewives ordering ice-cream for Sunday.

If a young man appeared it was always to buy a box of candy for some other girl. It made Kedzie cynical to

see him haggle and ponder, trying to make the maximum hit with a minimum of ammunition. It made her more distrustful to see young men trying to flirt with her while they bought tributes of devotion to somebody else. But Kedzie also found out that several of the neighborhood girls accepted candy from several gentlemen simultaneously, and she drew many cynical conclusions from the candy business.

Skip Magruder was attentive and took her out to moving pictures when he was free. In return for the courtesy she took her meals at "The Bon-Ton Bakery by Joe Gidden." Whenever he dared, Skip skipped the change. He could always slip her an extra titbit.

On that account she had to be a little extra gracious to him when he took her to the movies. Holding hands didn't hurt.

Not a week had gone before Skip had rivals. He caught Kedzie in deceptions. She kept him guessing, and the poor fool suffered the torments and thrills of jealousy. A flip young fellow named Hoke, agent for a jobber in ice-cream cones, and a tubby old codger named Kalteyer, who facetiously claimed to own a chewing-gum mine, were added competitors for Kedzie's smiles, while Skip teetered between homicide and suicide.

Skip was wretched, and Kedzie was enthralled by her own success. She had conquered New York. She had a job in a candy-store, a room in a flat with the family of a delicatessen merchant; she had as many flirtations as she could carry, and an increasing waiting-list. What more could woman ask?

And all this was in far upper Third Avenue. She had not yet been down to First Street. In fact, she was in New York two weeks before she got as far south as 100th Street. She had almost forgotten that she had ever dwelt elsewhere than in New York. Her imitative instinct was already exchanging her Western burr for a New York purr.

Her father and mother would hardly have known her voice if they had heard it. And they would hardly meet her, since they had given her up and gone back home, far sadder, no wiser, much poorer. They did not capture the insurance money, and they had no rewards to offer for Kedzie.

Now and then a Kedzie would be reported in some part of the country, and a wild paragraph would be printed about her. Now and then she would be found dead in a river or would be traced as a white slave drugged and sold and shipped to the Philippine Islands. The stories were heinously cruel to her father and mother, who mourned her in Nimrim and repented dismally of their harshness to the best and pirtiest girl ever lived.

Meanwhile Kedzie sold candy and ate less and less of it. She began to see more pretentious phases of city life and to be discontent with her social triumph. She began to understand how cheap her lovers were. She called them "mutts." She came to suffer agonies of remorse at the liberties she had given them.

Mr. Kalteyer, the chewing-gum prince, in an effort to overcome the handicap of weight and age which Mr. Hoke did not carry, told Kedzie that her picture ought to be on every counter in the world, and he could get it there. He'd love to see her presented as a classy dame showing her ivories and proving how "beneficiary" his chewing-gum was for the teeth as well as the digestion.

Kedzie told the delicatessen merchant's wife all about his glorious promises, and she said, very sagely:

"Bevare vit dose bo'quet fellers. Better as so many roses is it he should brink you a slice roastbif once. Lengwidge of flowers is nice, but money is de svell talker. Take it by me, money is de svell talker!"

Kedzie was glad of such wisdom, and she convinced Mr. Kalteyer that it took more than conversation to buy her favor. He kept his word under some duress, and took Kedzie to Mr. Eben E. Kiam, a manufacturer of

show-cards and lithographs, with an advertising agency besides.

Mr. Kiam studied her poses and smiles for days before he got her at her best. An interested observer and a fertile suggester in his office was a young Mr. Gilfoyle, who wrote legends for show-cards, catch-lines for new wares, and poems, if pressed.

Gilfoyle had the poet's prophetic eye, and he murmured to Mr. Kiam that there were millions in "Miss Adair's" face and form if they were worked right. He took pains to let Kedzie overhear this. It pleased her. Millions were something she decided she would like.

Gilfoyle developed wonderfully in the sun of Kedzie's interest. He told Kalteyer that there was no money in handling chewing-gum in a small way as a piker; what he wanted was a catchy name, a special selling-argument, and a national publicity campaign. He advised Kalteyer to borrow a lot of money at the banks and sling himself.

Kalteyer breathed hard. Gilfoyle was assailed by an epilepsy of inspirations. In place of "Kalteyer's Peerless Gum," he proposed the enthralling title, "Breathasweeta." Others had mixed pepsin in their edible rubber goods of various flavors. Gilfoyle proposed perfume!

Kalteyer was astounded at the boy's genius. He praised him till Kedzie began to think him worth cultivation, especially as he proposed to flood the country with portraits of Kedzie as the Breathasweeta Girl.

The muse of advertising swooped down and whispered to Gilfoyle the delicious lines to be printed under Kedzie's smile.

> Kiss me again. Who are you?
> You use Breathasweeta. You must be all right.

Kalteyer was swept off his feet. He ran to the bank while Kiam raised Gilfoyle's salary.

The life-size card of Kedzie was made with a prop to hold it up. It was so much retouched and altered in the

printing that her own father, seeing it in a Nimrim drug-store, never recognized it. Nearly every drug-store in the country set up a Kedzie in its show-window.

The Breathasweeta came into such demand that Kalteyer was temporarily bankrupted by prosperity. He had to borrow so much money to float his wares that he had none for Kedzie's entertainment.

Mr. Kiam took her up as a valuable model for advertising purposes.

He aroused in Kedzie an inordinate appetite for pictures of herself. All day long she was posed in costumes for various calendars, as a farmer's daughter, as a society queen, as a camera girl, as a sausage nymph, and as the patron saint of a brewery.

In a week she had arrived at classic poses in Greek robes. One by one these were abbreviated, till Kedzie was being very generally revealed to the public eye.

The modesty her mother had whipped into her was gradually unlearned step by step, garment by garment, without Kedzie's noticing the change in her soul.

CHAPTER XIV

JUST about the hour of that historic day when Kedzie was running away from her father and mother Prissy Atterbury was springing his great story about Jim Dyckman and Charity.

Prissy had gone on to his destination, the home of the Winnsboros in Greenwich, but he arrived late, and the house guests were too profoundly absorbed in their games of auction to make a fit audience for such a story. So Prissy saved it for a correct moment, though he nearly burst with it. He slept ill that night from indigestion due to retention of gossip.

The next forenoon he watched as the week-end prisoners dawdled down from their gorgeous cells, to a living-room as big and as full of seats as a hotel lobby. They threw themselves on lounges and huge chairs and every form of encouragement to indolence. They threw themselves also on the mercy and the ingenuity of their hostess. But Mrs. Winnsboro expected her guests to bring their own plans and take care of themselves. They were marooned.

When the last malingerer arrived with yawns still unfinished, Prissy seized upon a temporary hush and began to laugh. Pet Bettany, who was always sullen before luncheon, grumbled:

"What ails you, Priss? Just seeing some joke you heard last night?"

Priss snapped, "I was thinking."

"You flatter yourself," said Pet. "But I suppose you've got to get it off your chest. I'll be the goat. What is it?"

Prissy would have liked to punish the cat by not telling her a single word of it, but he could not withhold the scandal another moment.

"Well, I'll tell you the oddest thing you ever heard in all your life."

Pretending to tell it to Pet, he was reaching out with voice and eyes to muster the rest. He longed for a megaphone and cursed such big rooms.

"I was passing through the Grand Central to take my train up here, you understand, and who should I see walk in from an incoming express, you understand, but—who, I say, should I see but—oh, you never would guess—you simply never would guess. Nev-vir-ir!"

"Who cares who you saw," said Pet, and viciously started to change the subject, so that Prissy had to jump the prelude.

"It was Jim Dyckman. Well, in he comes from the train, you understand, and looks about among the crowd of people waiting for the train—to meet people, you understand."

Pet broke in, frantically: "Yes, I understand! But if you say 'understand' once more I'll scream and chew up the furniture!"

Prissy regarded her with patient pity and went on:

"Jim didn't see me, you un—you see—and—but just as I was about to say hello to him he turns around and begins to stare into the crowd of other people getting off the same train that he got off, you underst— Well, I had plenty of time for my train, so I waited—not to see what was up, you un— I do say it a lot, don't I? Well, I waited, and who should come along but—well, this you never would guess—not in a month of Sundays."

A couple of flanneled oaves impatient for the tennis-court stole away, and Pet said:

"Speed it up, Priss; they're walking out on you."

"Well, they won't walk out when they know who the woman was. Jim was waiting for—he was waiting for—"

He paused a moment. Nobody seemed interested, and so he hastened to explode the name of the woman.

"Charity Coe! It was Charity Coe Jim was waiting for! They had come in on the same train, you understand, and yet they didn't come up the platform together. Why? I ask you. Why didn't they come up the platform together? Why did Jim come along first and wait? Was it to see if the coast was clear? Now, I ask you!"

There was respect enough paid to Prissy's narrative now. In fact, the name of Charity in such a story made the blood of everybody run cold—not unpleasantly—yet not altogether pleasantly.

Some of the guests scouted Prissy's theory. Mrs. Neff was there, and she liked Charity. She puffed contempt and cigarette-smoke at Atterbury, and murmured, sweetly, "Prissy, you're a dirty little liar, and your long tongue ought to be cut out and nailed up on a wall."

Prissy nearly wept at the injustice of such skepticism. It was Pet Bettany, of all people, who came to his rescue with credulity. She was sincerely convinced. A voluptuary and intrigante herself, she believed that her own ideas of happiness and her own impulses were shared by everybody, and that people who frowned on vice were either hypocrites or cowards.

She could not imagine how small a part and how momentary a part evil ambitions play in the lives of clean, busy souls like Charity. In fact, Pet flattered herself as to her own wickedness, and pretended to be worse than she was, in order to establish a reputation for candor.

Vice has its hypocrisies as well as virtue.

Pet had long been impatient of the celebration of Charity Coe's saintly attributes, and it had irked her to see so desirable a catch as Jim Dyckman squandering his time on a woman who was already married and liked it. He might have been interested in Pet if Charity had let him alone.

Pet also was stirred with the detestation of sin in orderly people that actuates disorderly people. She broke out with surprising earnestness.

"Well, I thought as much! So Charity Coe is human, after all, the sly devil! She's fooling even that foxy husband of hers. She's playing the same game, too—and a sweet little foursome it makes."

She laughed so abominably that Mrs. Neff threw away her cigarette and growled:

"Oh, shut up, Pet; you make me sick! Let's go out in the air."

Mrs. Neff was old enough to say such things, and Pet dampered her noise a trifle. But she held Prissy back and made him recount his adventure again. They had a good laugh over it—Prissy giggling and hugging one knee, Pet whooping with that peasant mirth of hers.

The same night, at just about the hour when Kedzie Thropp was falling asleep in Crotona Park and Jim Dyckman was sulking alone in his home and Charity was brooding alone in hers, Prissy Atterbury was delighted to see a party of raiders from another house-party motor up to the Winnsboros' and demand a drink.

Prissy was a trifle glorious by this time. He had been frequenting a bowl of punch subtly liquored, but too much sweetened. He leaned heavily on a new-comer as he began his story. The new-comer pushed Prissy aside with scant courtesy.

"Ah, tell us a new one!" he said. "That's ancient history!"

"What-what-what," Prissy stammered. "Who told you s'mush?"

"Pet Bet. telephoned it to us this morning. I heard it from three other people to-day."

"Well, ain't that absloosh ly abdominable."

Prissy began to cry softly. He knew the pangs of an author circumvented by a plagiarist.

The next morning his head ached and he rang up an

eye-opener or two. The valet found him in violet pajamas, holding his jangling head and moaning:

"There was too much sugar in the punch."

He remembered Pet's treachery, and he groaned that there was too much vinegar in life. But he determined to fight for his story, and he did. Long after Pet had turned her attention to other reputations, Prissy was still peddling his yarn.

The story went circlewise outward and onward like the influence of a pebble thrown into a pool. Two people who had heard the story and doubted it met; one told it to the other; the other said she had heard it before; and they parted mutually supported and definitely convinced that the rumor was fact. Repetition is confirmation, and history is made up of just such self-propelled lies—fact founded on fiction.

We create for ourselves a Nero or a Cleopatra, a Washington or a Molly Pitcher, from the gossip of enemies or friends or imaginers, and we can be sure of only one thing —that we do not know the true truth.

But we also do wrong to hold gossip in too much discredit. It gives life fascination, makes the most stupid neighbors interesting. It keeps up the love of the great art of fiction and the industry of character-analysis. A small wonder that human beings are addicted to it, when we are so emphatically assured that heaven itself is devoted to it, and that we are under the incessant espionage of our Deity, while the angels are eavesdroppers and reporters carrying note-books in which they write with indelible ink the least things we do or say or think.

CHAPTER XV

TO see into other people's hearts and homes and lives is one of the primeval instincts. In that curiosity all the sciences are rooted; and it is a scientific impulse that makes us hanker to get back of faces into brains, to push through words into thoughts, and to ferret out of silences the emotions they smother.

Gossip is one of the great vibrations of the universe. Like rain, it falls on the just and on the unjust; it ruins and it revives; it quenches thirst; it makes the desert bloom with cactuses and grotesque flowers, and it beats down violets and drowns little birds in their nests.

Gossip was now awakening a new and fearful interest in Charity Coe and Jim Dyckman.

Two women sitting at a hair-dresser's were discussing the gossip according to Prissy through the shower of their tresses. The manicure working on the nails of one of them glanced up at the coiffeur and gasped with her eyes. The manicure whispered it to her next customer—who told it to her husband in the presence of their baby. The baby was not interested, but the nurse was, and when she rode out with the baby she told the chauffeur. The chauffeur used the story as a weapon of scorn to tease Jim Dyckman's new valet with. Jules would have gone into a frenzy of denial, but Jules was by now wearing the livery of his country in the trenches. The new valet—Dallam was his name—tried to sell the story to a scavenger-editor who did not dare print it yet, though he put it in the safe where he kept such material against the day of

need. Also he paid Dallam a retainer to keep him in touch with the comings and goings of Dyckman.

And thus the good name of a good woman went through the mud like a white flounce torn and dragged and unnoticed. For of course Charity never dreamed that any one was giving such importance to the coincidence of her railroad journey with Jim Dyckman.

No more did Dyckman. He knew all too well what gulfs had parted him from Charity even while he sat with her in the train. He had suffered such rebuffs from her that he was bitterly aggrieved. He was telling himself that he hated Charity for her stinginess of soul at the very time that the whispers were damning her too great generosity in his favor.

While gossip was recruiting its silent armies against her for her treason to her husband, Charity was wondering why her loyalty to him was so ill paid. She did not suspect Cheever of treason to her. That was so odious that she simply could not give it thought room.

She stumbled on a newspaper article, the same perennial essay in recurrence, to the effect that many wives lose their husbands by neglect of their own charms. It was full of advice as to the tricks by which a woman may lure her spouse back to the hearth and fasten him there, combining domestic vaudeville with an interest in his business, but relying above all on keeping Cupid's torch alight by being Delilah every day.

Charity Coe was startled. She wondered if she were losing Cheever by neglecting herself. She began to pay more heed to her dress and her hats, her hair, her complexion, her smile, her general attractiveness.

Cheever noticed the strange alteration, and it bewildered him. He could not imagine why his wife was flirting with him. She made it harder for him to get away to Zada, but far more eager to. He did not like Charity at all, in that impersonation. Neither did Charity. She hated herself after a day or two of wooing her official wooer.

"You ought to be arrested," she told her mirror-self.

There were plays and novels that counseled a neglected wife to show an interest in another man. Charity was tempted to use Jim Dyckman as a decoy for her own wild duck; but Dyckman had sailed away in his new yacht, on a cruise with his yacht club.

The gossip did not die in his absence. It oozed along like a dark stream of fly-gathering molasses. Eventually it came to the notice of a woman who was Zada's dearest friend and hated her devotedly.

She told it to Zada as a taunt, to show her that Zada's Mr. Cheever was as much deceived as deceiving. Zada, of course, was horribly delighted. She promptly told Cheever that his precious wife had been having a lovely affair with Jim Dyckman. Cheever showed her where she stood by forbidding her to mention his wife's name. He told Zada that, whatever his wife might be, she was good as gold.

He left Zada with great dignity and made up his mind to kill Jim Dyckman. In his fury he was convinced of the high and holy and cleanly necessity of murder. All of our basest deeds are always done with the noblest motives. Cheever forgot his own wickednesses in his mission to punish Dyckman. The assassination of Dyckman, he was utterly certain, would have been what Browning called "a spittle wiped from the beard of God."

But he was not permitted to carry out his mission, for he learned that Dyckman was somewhere on the Atlantic, far beyond Cheever's reach.

Disappointed bitterly at having to let him live awhile, Cheever went to his home, to denounce his wife. He found her reading. She was overjoyed to see him. He stared at her, trying to realize her inconceivable depravity.

"Hello, honey!" she cried. "What's wrong? You've got a fever, I'm sure. I'm going to take your temperature."

From her hospital experience she carried a little ther-

mometer in her hand-bag. She had it by her and rose to put it under his tongue.

He struck it from her, and she stared at him. He stood quivering like an overdriven horse. He called her a name highly proper in a kennel club, but inappropriate to the boudoir.

"You thought you'd get away with it, didn't you? You thought you'd get away with it, didn't you?" he panted.

"Get away with what, honey?" she said, thinking him delirious. She had seen a hundred men shrieking in wild frenzies from brains too hot.

"You and Dyckman! humph!" he raged. "So you and Jim Dyckman sneaked off to the mountains together, did you? And came back on the same train, eh? And thought I'd never find it out. Why, you—"

What he would have said she did not wait to hear. She was human, after all, and had thousands of plebeian and primitive ancestors and ancestresses. They jumped into her muscles with instant instinct. She slapped his face so hard that it rocked out of her view.

She stood and fumbled at her tingling palm, aghast at herself and at the lightning-stroke from unknown distances that shattered her whole being. Then she began to sob.

Peter Cheever's aching jaw dropped, and he gazed at her befuddled. His illogical belief in her guilt was illogically converted to a profound conviction of her innocence. The wanton whom he had accused was metamorphosed into a slandered angel who would not, could not sin. In his eyes she was hopelessly pure.

"Thank God!" he moaned. "Oh, thank God for one clean woman in this dirty world!"

He caught her bruised hand and began to kiss it and pour tears on it. And she looked down at his beautiful bent head and laid her other hand on it in benison.

It is one way of reconciling families.

Cheever was so filled with remorse that he was tempted to write Jim Dyckman a note of apology. That was one of the few temptations he ever resisted.

Now he was going to kill everybody who had been dastard enough to believe and spread the scandal he had so easily believed himself. But he would have had to begin with Zada. He was afraid of Zada. He enjoyed a few days of honeymoon with Charity.

He dodged Zada on the telephone, and he gave Mr. Hudspeth instructions to say that he was always out in case of a call from "Miss You Know." "I know," Mr. Hudspeth answered.

One morning, at an incredibly early hour for Zada, she walked into his office and asked Mr. Hudspeth to retire—also the suspiciously good-looking stenographer. Then Zada said:

"Peterkin, it's time you came home."

His laugh was hard and sharp. She took out a little weapon. She had managed to evade the Sullivan law against the purchase or possession of weapons. Peter was nauseated. Zada was calm.

"Peterkin," she said, "did you read yesterday about that woman who shot a man and then herself?"

Peter had read it several times recently—the same story with different names. It had long been a fashionable thing: the disprized lover murders the disprizing lover and then executes the murderer. It was expensive to rugs and cheated lawyers and jurors out of fees, but saved the State no end of money.

Cheever surrendered.

"I'll come home," he said, gulping the last quinine word. It seemed to him the most loyal thing he could do at the moment. It would have been unpardonably unkind to Charity to let himself be spattered all over his office and the newspapers by a well-known like Zada.

Once "home" with Zada, he took the pistol away from her. But she laughed and said:

"I can always buy another one, deary."

Thus Zada re-established her rights. Cheever was very sorry. He cursed himself for being so easily led astray. He wondered why it was his lot to be so fickle and incapable of loyalty. He did not know. He could only accept himself as he was. Oneself is the most wonderful, inexplicable thing in the world.

So Charity's brief honeymoon waned, blinked out again.

Jim Dyckman came home from the yacht cruise in blissless ignorance of all this frustrated drama. He longed to see Charity, but dared not. He took sudden hope from remembering her determination to go back abroad to her nursery of wounded soldiers.

He had an inspiration. He would go abroad also—as a member of the aviation corps. He already owned a fairly good hydro-aeroplane which had not killed him yet —he was a good swimmer, and lucky

He ordered the best war-eagle that could be made, and began to take lessons in military maps, bird's-eye views, and explosives. He was almost happy. He would improve on the poet's dream-ideal, "Were I a little bird, I'd fly to thee."

He would be a big bird, and he'd fly with his Thee. He would call on Charity in France when they both had an evening off, and take her up into the clouds for a sky-ride.

He had an ambition. At worst, he could die for France. It is splendid to have something to die for. It makes life worth living.

He was so ecstatic in his first flight with his finished machine that he fell and broke one of its wings, also one of his own. Charity heard of his accident and called on him at his mother's house. He told her his plans.

"Too bad!" she sighed. "I'm not going abroad. Besides, I couldn't see you if I did."

Then she told him what Cheever had said, but not how

she had slapped. Jim was wild. He rose on his bad arm and fell back again, groaning:

"I'll kill him for that."

Everybody is always going to kill everybody. Sometimes somebody does kill somebody. But Dyckman went over to the great majority. Charity begged him not to kill her husband, and to please her he promised not to.

Charity, having insured her husband's life, said: "And now, Jimmie old boy, I mustn't see you any more. Gossip has linked our names. We must unlink them. My husband and you will butcher each other if I'm not careful, so it's good-by for keeps, and God bless vou, isn't it? Promise?"

"I'll promise anything, if you'll go on away and let me alone," Jim groaned, his broken arm being quite sufficient trouble for him at the moment.

Charity laughed and went on away. She was deeply comforted by a promise which she knew he would not keep.

Dyckman himself, as soon as his broken bones ceased to shake his soul, groaned with loneliness and despaired of living without Charity—vowed in his sick misery that nobody could ever come between them. He could not, would not, live without her.

Still the gossip oozed along that he had not lived without her.

CHAPTER XVI

KEDZIE had come to town with no social ambitions whatsoever beyond a childish desire to be enormously rich and marry a beautiful prince. Her ideal of heaven at first was an eternal movie show interrupted at will by several meals a day, incessant soda-water and ice-cream and a fellow or two to spoon with, and some up-to-date duds—most of all, several pairs of those white-topped shoes all the girls in town were wearing.

The time would shortly come when Kedzie would abhor the word *swell* and despise the people who used it, violently forgetting that she had herself used it. She would soon be overheard saying to a mixed girl of her mixed acquaintance: "Take it from me, chick, when you find a dame calls herself a lady, she ain't. Nobody who is it says it, and if you want to be right, lay off such words as *swell* and *classy*."

Later, she would be finding that it took something still more than avoiding the word *lady* to deserve it. She would writhe to believe that she could never quite make herself exact with the term. She would hate those who had been born and made to the title, and she would revert at times to common instincts with fierce anarchy.

But one must go forward before one can backslide, and Kedzie was on the way up the slippery hill.

She had greatly improved the quality of her lodgings, her suitors, and her clothes. Her photographic successes in risky exposures had brought her a marked increase of wages. She wore as many clothes as she could in private, to make up for her self-denial before the camera. Her

taste in dress was soubrettish and flagrant, but it was not small-town. She was beginning to dislike ice-cream soda and candy and to call for beer and Welsh rabbit. She would soon be liking salads with garlic and Roquefort cheese in the dressing. She was mounting with splendid assiduity toward the cigarette and the high-ball. There was no stopping Kedzie. She kept rising on stepping-stones of her dead selves.

Landladies are ladder-rungs of progress, too; Kedzie's history might have been traced by hers.

Her camera career had led her from the flat of the delicatessen merchant, through various shabby lairs, into the pension of a vaudeville favorite of prehistoric fame. The house was dilapidated, and the brownstone front had the moth-eaten look of the plush furniture within.

Mrs. Jambers was as fat as if she fed on her own boarders, but she was once no less a person than Mrs. Trixie Jambers Coogan, of Coogan and Jambers. She had once evoked wild applause at Tony Pastor's by her clog-dancing.

There was another dancer there, an old grenadier of a woman who had been famous in her time as a *première danseuse* at the opera. Mrs. Bottger had spent a large part of her early life on one toe, but now she could hardly balance herself sitting down. She held on to the table while she ate. She did not look as if she needed to eat any more.

Kedzie was proud to know people who had been as famous as these two said they had been, but Bottger and Jambers used to fight bitterly over their respective schools of expression. Bottger insisted that the buck-and-wing and the double shuffle and other forms of jiggery were low. Jambers insisted that the ballet was immoral and, what was more, insincere. Mrs. Bottger was furious at the latter charge, but the former was now rather flattering. She used secretly to take out old photographs of herself as a slim young thing in tights with one toe for support and the other resting on one knee. She would gloat over

these as a miser over his gold; and she would shake her finger at her quondam self and scold it lovingly—"You wicked little thing, you!" Then she would hastily move it out of the reach of her tears. It was safe under the eaves of her bosom against her heart.

It was a merry war, with dishonors even, till a newcomer appeared, a Miss Eleanor Silsby, who taught the ultimate word in dancing; she admitted it herself. As she explained it, she went back to nature for her inspiration. Her pupils dressed as near to what nature had provided them with as they really dared. Miss Silsby said that they were trying to catch the spirit of wind and waves and trees and flowers, and translate it into the dance. They translated seaweed and whitecaps and clouds into steps. Miss Silsby was booking a few vaudeville dates "in order to bring the art of nature back to the people and bring the people back to the art of nature." What the people would do with it she did not explain—nor what the police would do to them if they tried it.

Miss Silsby had by the use of the most high-sounding phrases attained about the final word in candor. What clothes her pupils wore were transparent and flighty. The only way to reveal more skin would have been to grow it. Her pupils were much photographed in airy attitudes on beaches, dancing with the high knee-action so much prized in horses; flinging themselves into the air; curveting, with the accent on the curve; clasping one another in groups of nymphish innocence and artificial grace. It was all, somehow, so shocking for its insincerity that its next to nudity was a minor consideration. It was so full of affectation that it seemed quite lacking in the dangers of passion.

So gradually indeed had the mania for disrobing spread about the world that there was little or no shock to be had. People generally assumed to be respectable took their children to see the dances, even permitted them to learn them. According to Miss Silsby's press-notices, "Mem-

bers of wealthy and prominent families are taking up the new art." And perhaps they were doing as well by their children as more careful parents, since nothing is decent or indecent except by acclamation, and if nudity is made commonplace, there is one multitude of temptations removed from our curiosity.

But Bottger, whose ballet-tights and tulle skirt were once the horror of all good people—Bottger was disgusted with the dances of Miss Silsby, and said so.

Miss Silsby was merely amused by Bottger's hostility. She scorned her scorn, and with the utmost scientific and ethnological support declared that clothes were immoral in origin, and the cause of immorality and extravagance, since they were not the human integument. Jambers was not quite sure what "integument" was, but she thanked God she had never had it in her family.

An interested onlooker and in-listener at these boarding-house battles was Kedzie. By now she was weary of her present occupation—of course! She was tired of photographs of herself, especially as they were secured at the cost of long hours of posing under the hot skylight of a photograph gallery. Miss Silsby gave Kedzie a pair of complimentary seats to an entertainment at which the Silsby sirens were to dance. Kedzie was swept away with envy of the hilarity, the grace, the wild animal effervescence and elegance of motion.

She contrasted the vivacity of the dancer's existence with the stupidity of her still-life poses. She longed to run and pirouette and leap into the air. She wished she could kick herself in the back of the head to music the way the Silsby girls did.

When she told this to Miss Silsby the next day Miss Silsby was politely indifferent. Kedzie added:

"You know, I'm up on that classic stuff, too. Oh, yessum, Greek costumes are just everyday duds to me."

"Indeed!" Miss Silsby exclaimed.

Kedzie showed her some trade photographs of herself as

an Athénienne, and Miss Silsby pondered. Although her dances were supposed to purify and sweeten the soul, one of her darlings had so fiendish a temper that she had torn out several Psyche knots. She was the demurest of all in seeming when she danced, but she was uncontrollably jealous.

Miss Silsby saw that Kedzie's pout had commercial value. She invited Kedzie to join her troupe. And Kedzie did. The wages were small, but the world was new. She became one of the most attractive of the dancers. But once more the rehearsals and the long hours of idleness wore out her enthusiasm. She hated the regularity of the performances; every afternoon and evening she must express raptures she did not feel, by means of laborious jumpings and runnings to the same music. And she abominated the requirement to keep kicking herself in the back of the head.

Even the thrill of clotheslessness became stupid. It was disgusting not to have beautiful gowns to dance in. Zada L'Etoile and others had a new costume for every dance. Kedzie had one tiresome hip-length shift and little else. As usual, poor Kedzie found that realization was for her the parody of anticipation.

Kedzie's new art danced into her life a few new suitors, but they came at a time when she was almost imbecile over Thomas Gilfoyle, the advertising bard. He was the first intellectual man she had met—that is, he was intellectual compared with any other of her men friends. He could read and write something besides business literature. In fact, he was a fellow of startling ideas. He called himself a socialist. What the socialists would have called him it would be hard to say; they are given to strong language.

Kedzie had known in Nimrim what church socials were, for they were about the height of Nimrim excitement. But young Mr. Gilfoyle was not a church socialist. He detested all creeds and all churches and said things

about them and about religion that at first made Kedzie look up at the ceiling and dodge. But no brimstone ever broke through the plaster and she grew used to his diatribes.

She had never met one of these familiar enough figures before, and she was vaguely stirred by his chantings in behalf of humanity. He adored the poor laborers, though he did not treat the office-boy well and he was not gallant to the scrub-woman. But his theories were as beautiful as music, and he intoned them with ringing oratory. Kedzie did not know what he was talking about, any more than she knew what Caruso was singing about when she turned him on in Mrs. Jambers's phonograph, but his melodies put her heart to its paces, and so did Gilfoyle's.

Gilfoyle wrote her poems, too, real poems not meant for publication at advertising rates. Kedzie had never had anybody commit poetry at her before. It lifted her like that Biltmore elevator and sent her heart up into her head. He lauded Kedzie's pout as well as her more saltant expressions. He voiced a belief that life in a little hut with her would be luxury beyond the contemptible stupidities of life in a palace with another. Kedzie did not care for the hut detail, but the idolatry of so "brainy" a man was inspiring.

Kedzie and Gilfoyle were mutually afraid: she of his intellect, he of her beauty and of her very fragility. Of course, he called her by her new name, "Miss Adair." Later he implored the priceless joy of calling her by her first name.

Gilfoyle feared to ask this privilege in prose, and so he put it in verse. Kedzie found it in her mail at the stage door. She huddled in a corner of the big undressing-room where the nymphs prepared for their task. The young rowdies kept peeking over her shoulder and snatching at her letter, but when finally she read it aloud to them as a punishment and a triumph, they were stricken with awe. It ran thus:

Pretty maid, pretty maid, may I call you "Anita"?
Your last name is sweet, but your first name is sweeter.

Kedzie stumbled over this, because she had not yet eradicated the Western final "r" from her pronunciation. She thought Mr. Gilfoyle was awful swell because he dropped it naturally. But she read on, scrambling over some of the words the way a horse jumps a fence one rail too high.

You are so adorable
I find it deplorable,
    Absurd and abnormal.
    To cling to the formal
'Twere such a good omen
To drop the cognomen.
    So I beg you to promise
    That you'll call me "Thomas,"
Or better yet, "Tommie,"
Instead of th' abomi-
    Nable "Mr. Gilfoyle."
    You can, and you will foil
My torments Mephistian
By using my Christian
    Name and permitting Yours Truly
    To call you yours too-ly.

Miss Adair,
Hear my prayer
Do I dare
    Call my love when I meet her
    "Anita"? Anita! Anita!!

In the silence that followed she whisked out a box of shrimp-pink letter-paper she had bought at a drug-store. It was daintily ruled in violet lines and had a mauve "A" at the top. It was called "The Nobby Note," and so she knew that it was all right.

She wrote on it the simple but thrilling answer:

DEAR TOMMIE,—You bet your boots!

ANITA.

By the time she had sealed and addressed the shrimpy envelope and begun feverishly to make up for lost time in changing her costume, the other girls had recovered a little from the suffocation of her glory. One of them murmured:

"Say, Aneet, what is your first name? Your really truly one."

Another snarled, "What's your really truly last name?"

A third dryad whooped, "I bet it's Lizzie Smoots or Mag Wimpfhauser."

The others had other suggestions to howl, and Anita cowered in silence, wondering if one of the fiends would not at any moment guess "Kedzie Thropp."

The call to arms and legs cut short her torment, and for once the music seemed appropriate. Never had she danced with such lyricism.

Gilfoyle had the presence of mind to be waiting in the alley after the matinée, and took from her hand the note she was carrying to the mail-box. When he read it he almost embraced her right there.

They took a street-car to Mrs. Jambers's boarding-house, but cruel disappointment waited for them. Another boarder was entertaining her gentleman friend in the parlor. Kedzie was furious. So was the other boarder.

That night Gilfoyle met Kedzie again at the stage door, but they could not go to the boarding-house, for Mrs. Jambers occupied at that time a kind of false mantelpiece that turned out to be a bed in disguise. So they went to the Park.

Young Gilfoyle treated Kedzie with almost more respect than she might have desired. He was one of those self-chaperoning young men who spout anarchy and practise asceticism. Even in his poetry it was the necessitous limitations of rhyme-words that dragged him into his boldest thoughts.

Sitting on a dark Park bench with Kedzie, he could not have been more circumspect if there had been sixteen

duennas gathered around. The first time he hugged her was a rainy night when Kedzie had to snuggle close and haul his arm around her, and then his heart beat so fast against her shoulder that she was afraid he would die of it.

Cool, wet, windy nights in late summer feel very cold, and a damp bench under dripping trees was a nuisance to a tired dancing-girl. Love was so inconvenient that when Kedzie bewailed the restrictions imposed on unmarried people Gilfoyle proposed marriage. It popped out of him so suddenly that Kedzie felt his heart stop and listen. Then it began to race, and hers ran away, too.

"Why, Mr. Gilfoyle! Why, Tommie!" she gurgled. It was her first proposal of marriage, and she lost her head. "And you a socialist and telling me you didn't believe in marriages!"

"I don't," said Gilfoyle, with lovely sublimity above petty consistencies, "except with you, Anita. I don't believe in anything exclusive for anybody except you for me and me for you. We've just got to be each other's own, haven't we?"

Kedzie could think of nothing to add except a little emphasis; so she cried, "Each other's very ownest own!"

Thus they became engaged. That made it possible for her to have him in her own room at the boarding-house. Also it enabled him to borrow money from her with propriety when they were hungry for supper. Fortunately, he did not mind her going on working. Not at all.

Gilfoyle was a fiend of jealousy concerning individuals, but he was not jealous of the public. It did not hurt him at all to have Kedzie publishing her structural design to the public, because he loved the public, and the public paid indirectly. He wanted the masses to have what the classes have. That delighted Kedzie, at first.

What she thought she understood of his socialistic scheme was that every poor girl like herself was going to have her limousine and her maid and a couple of footmen.

She did not pause to figure out how complicated that would be, since the maid would have to have her maid, and that maid hers, and so on, *ad infinitum*, *ad absurdum*.

Later Kedzie found that Gilfoyle's first intention was to impoverish the rich, elimousinate their wives, and put an end to luxury. It astonished her how furious he got when he read of a ball given by people of wealth, though a Bohemian dance at Webster Hall pleased him very much, even though some of the costumes made Kedzie's Greek vest look prudish.

But all this Kedzie was to find out after she had married the wretch. One finds out so many things when one marries one. It is like going behind the scenes at a performance of "Romeo and Juliet," seeing the stage-braces that prop the canvas palaces, and hearing Juliet bawl out Romeo for crabbing her big scene. The shock is apt to be fatal to romance unless one is prepared for it in advance as an inevitable and natural conflict.

CHAPTER XVII

KEDZIE and Tommie enjoyed a cozy betrothal. He was busy at his shop, and she was busy at hers. They did not see much of each other, and that made for the prosperity of their love. They talked a great deal of marriage, but it seemed expedient to wait till one or the other acquired a raise of wage. The Silsby dancers were playing at cut salaries in accord with the summer schedules, and business was very light at the advertising agency.

The last week the troupe was playing at the Bronx Opera House, and there Skip Magruder chanced to see her —to see more of her than he had ever expected to on the hither side of matrimony.

His old love came back with a tidal rush, and he sent her a note written with care in a barroom—or so Kedzie judged from the beery fragrance of it. It said:

DEAR ANITA,—Was considerable supprise to see you to-night as didn't know you was working in vawdvul and as I have been very loansome for you thought would ask you would you care to take supper after show with your loveing admirror and friend will wait for anser at stage door hopping to see you for Old Lang's Sign.

PATRICK X. MAGRUDER—"SKIP."

Kedzie did not read this letter to the gang of nymphs. She blushed bitterly and mumbled, "Well, of all the nerve!" After some hesitation she wrote on Skip's note the "scatting" words, "*Nothing doing*" and sent it back by the dismal stage doorkeeper.

She had hoped Skip would have the decency to go

away and die quietly and not hang round to see her leave with Mr. Gilfoyle. Skip had a hitch in one leg, but Mr. Gilfoyle had a touch of writer's cramp, and Kedzie had no desire to see the result of a conflict between two such victims of unpreparedness.

She forgot both rivals in the excitement of a sudden incursion of Miss Silsby, who came crying:

"Oh, girls, girls, what Do you sup-Pose has Happened? I have been en-Gaged to give my dances at Noxon's—old Mrs. Noxon's, in Newport."

Miss Silsby always used the first person singular, though she never danced; and if she had, in the costume of her charges, the effect would have been a fatal satire.

By now Kedzie was familiar enough with names of great places to realize the accolade. To be recognized by the Noxons was to be patented by royalty. And Newport was Mecca.

The pilgrimage thither was a voyage of discovery with all an explorer's zest. Her first view of the city disappointed her, but her education had progressed so far that she was able to call the pleasant, crooked streets of the older towns "picturesque." A person who is able to murmur "How picturesque!" has made progress in snobbical education. Kedzie murmured, "How picturesque!" when she saw the humbler portions of Newport.

But there was a poignant sincerity in her admiration of the homes of the rich. Bad taste with ostentation moved her as deeply as true stateliness. Her heart made outcry for experience of opulence. She now despised the palaces of New York because they had no yards. Newport houses had parks. Newport was the next candy-shop she wanted to work in.

The splendor of the visit was dimmed for her, however, when she learned that she would not be permitted to swim at Bailey's Beach. Immediately she felt that swimming anywhere else was contemptible.

Still, she was seeing Newport, and she could not tell

what swagger fate might now be within reach of her hands—or her feet, rather—for Kedzie was gaining her golden apples not by clutching at them, but by kicking them off the tree of opportunity with her carefully manicured little toes.

Also she said "swagger" now instead of "classy" or "swell." Also she forgot to telegraph Tommie Gilfoyle, as she promised, of her safe arrival. Also she was too busy to write to him that first night.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Prissy Atterbury started the gossip rolling that he had seen Jim Dyckman enter the Grand Central Terminal alone and wait for Charity Coe Cheever to come from the same train it did not take long for the story to roll on to Newport. By then it was a pretty definite testimony of guilt in a vile intrigue. When Mrs. Noxon announced her charity circus people wondered if even she would dare include Mrs. Cheever on her bead-roll. The afternoon was for guests; the evening was for the public at five dollars a head.

One old crony of Charity's, a Mrs. Platen, revived the story for Mrs. Noxon at the time when she was editing the list of invitations for the afternoon. Mrs. Noxon seemed to be properly shocked.

"Of course, you'll not invite her now," said Mrs. Platen.

"Not invite her!" Mrs. Noxon snorted. "I'll invite her twice. In the first place, I don't believe it of Charity Coe. I knew her mother. In the second, if it's true, what of it? Charity Coe has done so much good that she has a right to do no end of bad to balance her books."

To emphasize her support, Mrs. Noxon insisted on Charity Coe's coming to her as a house-guest for a week before the fête. This got into all the papers and redeemed Charity's good name amazingly. Perhaps Jim Dyckman saw it in the papers. At least he and his yacht drifted into the harbor the day of the affair. Of course he had an invitation.

The Noxon affair was the usual thing, only a little more

so. People dressed themselves as costlily as they could, for hours beforehand—then spent a half-hour or more fuming in a carriage-and-motor tangle waiting to arrive at the entrance, while the heat sweat all the starch out of themselves and their clothes.

A constant flood poured in upon Mrs. Noxon, or tried to find her at the receiving-post. She was usually not there. She was like a general running a big battle. She had to gallop to odd spots now and then.

The tradition of her selectness received a severe strain in the presence of such hordes of guests. They trod on one another's toes, tripped on one another's parasols, beg-pardoned with ill-restrained wrath, failed to get near enough to see the sights, stood on tiptoe or bent down to peer through elbows like children outside a ball-park.

The entertainment was vaudeville disguised by expense. It was not easy to hold the attention of those surfeited eyes and ears. Actors and actresses of note almost perished with wrath and humiliation at the indifference to their arts. Loud laughter from the back rows broke in at the wrong time, and appalling silences greeted the times to laugh.

The fame, or notoriety, of the Silsby dancers attracted a part of the throng to the marble swimming-pool and the terraced fountain with its deluged statuary. Jim Dyckman and Charity Coe suddenly found themselves together. They hated it, but they could not easily escape. Jim felt that all eyes were bulging out at them. He had murder in his heart.

There was the usual delay, the frank impatience and leg-fag of people unused to standing about except at receptions and dressmakers'. Finally the snobbish string-orchestra from Boston, which played only the most exclusive music, began to tune up, and at length, after much mysterious wigwagging of signals to play, it played a hunting-piece.

Suddenly from the foliage came what was supposed to

be a startled nymph. The spectators were startled, too, for a moment, for her costume was amazing. Even on Bailey's Beach it would have attracted attention.

Kedzie was the nymph. She was making her début into great society. What would her mother have said if she could have seen her there? Her father would have said nothing. He would have fainted unobtrusively, for the first time in his life.

Kedzie was scared. She had stage-fright of all these great people so overdressed when she was not even underclothed.

"Poor little thing!" said Charity, and began to applaud to cheer her up. She nudged Jim. "Come on, help her out. Isn't she beautiful?"

"Is she?" said Jim, applauding.

It did not seem right to praise one woman's beauty to another. It was like praising one author's work to another, or praising another preacher's sermon to a preacher's face.

Still, Jim had to admit that Kedzie was pretty. Suddenly he wanted to torment Charity, and so he exclaimed:

"You're right, she is a little corker, a very pleasant dream!" Anger at Charity snatched away the blindfold which is another name for fidelity. Scales fell from his eyes, and he saw truth in nakedness. He saw beauty everywhere. All about him were beautiful women in rich costume. He saw that beauty is not a matter of opinion, a decision of love's, but a happening to be regular or curvilinear or warm of color or hospitable in expression.

Particularly he saw the beauty of Kedzie. There was more of her to see than of those other women behind their screens of silk and lace and linen. His infatuation for Charity Coe had befuddled him, wrapped him in a fog through which all other women passed like swaddled figures. He felt free now.

Over Charity's shoulder and through the spray of the

goura on her hat he saw Kedzie sharp and stark, her suavities of line and the milk-smooth fabric of her envelope. He studied Kedzie with emancipation, not seeing Charity at all any more—nor she him.

For Charity studied Kedzie, too. She felt academically the delight of the girl's beauty, a statue coming to life, or a living being going back into statue—Galatea in one phase or the other. She felt the delight of the girl's successful drawing. She smiled to behold it. Then her smile drooped, for the words of the old song came back crooning the ancient regret:

How small a part of time they share—

There was elegy now in Kedzie's graces. Youth was of their essence, and youth shakes off like the dust on the moth's wing. Youth is gone at a touch.

In her sorrow she turned to look up at Jim. She was shocked to see how attentively he regarded Kedzie. He startled her by the fascination in his mien. She looked again at Kedzie.

Somehow the girl immediately grew ugly—or what beauty she had was that of a poisonous snake. And she looked common, too. Who else but a common creature would come out on a lawn thus unclothed for a few dollars?

She looked again at Jim Dyckman, and he was not what he had been. He was as changed as the visions in Lewis Carroll's poem. She saw that he had his common streak, too: he was mere man, animal, temptable. But she forgave him. Curiously, he grew more valuable since she felt that she was losing him.

There was an impatient shaking at her breast. In anybody else she would have called it jealousy. This astounded her, made her afraid of herself and of him. What right had she to be jealous of anybody but Peter Cheever? She felt that she was more indecent than Kedzie. She

bowed her head and blushed. Scales fell from her eyes also. She was like Eve after the apple had taught her what she was. She wanted to hide. But she could not break through the crowd. She must stand and watch the dance through.

All this brief while Kedzie had stood wavering. There had been a hitch somewhere. The other nymphs were delayed in their entrance. One of them had stepped on a thorny rose and another had ripped her tunic—she came in at last with a safety-pin to protect her from the law; but then, safety-pins are among the primeval inventions.

According to the libretto, the wood-nymphs, terrified by a hunting-party, ran to take refuge with the water-nymphs. The water-nymphs were late likewise. The dryads came suddenly through Mrs. Noxon's imported shrubs, puncturing them with rhythmic attitudes. These lost something of their poetry from being held so long that equilibria were lost foolishly.

Finally, the water-sprites came forth from cleverly managed concealment in a bower and stood mid-thigh in the water about the fountain. They attitudinized also, with a kind of childish poetry that did not quite convince, for the fountain rained on them, and some of them shivered as cold gouts of water smote their shoulder-blades. One little Yiddish nymph gasped, "Oi, oi!" which was perfect Greek, though she didn't know it. Neither did anybody else. Several people snickered.

The hunting-music died away, and the wood-nymphs decided not to go into the water home; instead, they implored the water-nymphs to come forth from their liquid residence. But the water-nymphs refused. The dryads tried to lure them with gestures and dances. It was all dreadfully puerile, and yet somehow worth while.

The wood-nymphs wreathed a human chain about the marge of the pool. Unfortunately the marble had been splashed in spots by the fountain spray, and it was on the

slipperiest of the spots that Kedzie had to execute a pirouette.

Her pivotal foot slid; the other stabbed down in a wild effort to restore her balance. It slipped. She knew that she was gone. She made frenzied clutches at the air, but it would not sustain her. She was strangely sincere now in her gestures. The crowd laughed—then stopped short.

It was funny till it looked as if the nymph might be hurt. Jim Dyckman darted forward to save her. He knocked Charity aside roughly and did not know it. He arrived too late to catch Kedzie.

Kedzie sat into the pool with great violence. The spray she cast up fatally spotted several delicate robes. That would have been of some consolation to Kedzie if she had known it. But all she knew was that she went backward into the wrong element. Her wrath was greater than her sorrow.

Her head went down: she swallowed a lot of water, and when she kicked herself erect at last she was half strangled, entirely drenched, and quite blinded. The other nymphs, wood and water, giggled and shook with sisterly affection.

Kedzie was the wettest dryad that ever was. She stumbled forward, groping. Jim Dyckman bent, slipped his hands under her arms, and hoisted her to land. He felt ludicrous, but his chivalry was automatic.

Kedzie was so angry at herself and everybody else that she flung off his hands and snapped, "Quit it, dog on it!"

Jim Dyckman quit it. He had for his pains an insult and a suit of clothes so drenched that he had to go back to his yacht, running the gantlet of a hundred ridicules.

When he vanished Kedzie found herself in garments doubly clinging from being soaked. She was ashamed now, and hid her face in her arm.

Charity Coe took pity on her, and before the jealous Charity could check the generous Charity she had stepped forward and thrown about the girl's shoulders a light wrap

she carried. She led the child to the other wood-nymphs, and they took her back into the shrubbery.

"Wait till you hear what Miss Silsby's gotta say!" said one dryad, and another added:

"Woisse than that is this: you know who that was you flang out at so regardless?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," sobbed Kedzie.

"You would care if you was wise to who His Nibs was!"

"Who was it?" Kedzie gasped.

"Jim Dyckman—no less! You was right in his arms, and you hadda go an' biff him."

"Oh, Lord!" sighed Kedzie. "I'll never do." She was thinking that destiny had tossed her into the very arms of the aristocracy and she had been fool enough to fight her way out.

Jim Dyckman, meanwhile, was clambering into his car with clothes and ardor dampened. He was swearing to cut out the whole herd of women.

And Charity Coe Cheever was chattering flippantly with a group of the dispersing audience, while her heart was in throes of dismay at her own feelings and Jim Dyckman's.

THE SECOND BOOK

MRS. TOMMIE GILFOYLE HAS HER PICTURE TAKEN

CHAPTER I

THE scene was like one of the overcrowded tapestries of the Middle Ages. At the top was the Noxon palace, majestic, serene, self-confident in the correctness of its architecture and not afraid even of the ocean outspread below.

The house looked something like Mrs. Noxon at her best. Just now she was at her worst. She stood by her marble pool and glared at her mob of guests dispersing in knots of laughter and indifference. There were hundreds of men and women of all ages and sizes, and almost all of them were startling the summer of 1915 with the fashion-plates of 1916.

Mrs. Noxon turned from them to the dispersing nymphs of Miss Silsby's troupe. The nymphs were dressed in the fashion of 916 B.C. They also were laughing and snickering, as they sauntered toward the clump of trees and shrubs which masked their dressing-tent. One of them was not laughing—Kedzie. She was slinking along in wet clothes and doused pride. The beautiful wrap that Mrs. Charity Cheever had flung about her she had let fall and drag in a damp mess.

Mrs. Noxon was tempted to hobble after Kedzie and smack her for her outrageous mishap. But she could not afford the luxury. She must laugh with her guests. She marched after them to take her medicine of raillery more or less concealed as they went to look at the other side-shows and permit themselves to be robbed handsomely for charity.

Kedzie was afraid to meet Miss Silsby, but there was no

escape. The moment the shrubs closed behind her she fell into the ambush. Miss Silsby was shrill with rage and scarlet in the face. She swore, and she looked as if she would scratch.

"You miserable little fool!" she began. "You ought to be whipped within an inch of your life. You have ruined me! It was the biggest chance of my career. I should have been a made woman if it hadn't been for you. Now I shall be the joke of the world!"

"Please, Miss Silsby," Kedzie protested, "if you please, Miss Silsby—I didn't mean to fall into the water. I'm as sorry as I can be."

"What good does it do me for you to be sorry? I'm the one to be sorry. I should think you would have had more sense than to do such a thing!"

"How could I help it, dog on it!" Kedzie retorted, her anger recrudescent.

"Help it? Are you a dancer or are you a cow?"

Kedzie quivered as if she had been lashed. She struck back with her best Nimrim repartee, "You're a nice one to call me a cow, you big, fat, old lummox!"

Miss Silsby fairly mooed at this.

"You—you insolent little rat, you! You—oh, you—you! I'll never let you dance for me again—never!"

"I'd better resign, then, I suppose," said Kedzie.

"Resign? How dare you resign! You're fired! That's how you'll resign. You're fired! The impudence of her! She turns my life-work into a laughing-stock and then says she'd better resign!"

"How about to-night?" Kedzie put in, dazed.

"Never you mind about to-night. I'll get along without you if I have to dance myself."

The other nymphs shook under this, like corn-stalks in a wind.

But Kedzie was a statuette of pathos. She stood cowering barelegged before Miss Silsby, fully clothed in everything but her right mind. There was nothing Gre-

cian about Miss Silsby except the Medusa glare, and that turned Kedzie into stone. She finished her tirade by thrusting some money into Kedzie's hand and clamoring:

"Get into your clothes and get out of my sight."

Rage made Miss Silsby generous. She paid Kedzie an extra week and her fare to New York. Kedzie had no pocket to put her money in. She carried it in her hand and laid it on the table in the tent as she bent to whip her lithe form out of her one dripping garment.

The other nymphs followed her into the tent and made a Parthenonian frieze as they writhed out of their tunics and into their petticoats. They gathered about Kedzie in an ivory cluster and murmured their sympathy—Miss Silsby not being within ear-shot.

Kedzie blubbered bitterly as she glided into her every-day things, hooking her corsets askew, drawing her stockings up loosely, and lacing her boots all wrong. She was still jolted with sobs as she pushed the hat-pins home in her traveling-hat.

She kissed the other girls good-by. They were sorry to see her go, now that she was going. And she was very sorry to go, now that she had to.

If she had lingered awhile Miss Silsby would have found her there when she relented from sheer exhaustion of wrath, and would have restored her to favor. But Kedzie had stolen away in craven meekness.

To reach the trade-entrance Kedzie had to skirt the accursed pool of her destruction. Charity Coe was near it, seated on a marble bench alone. She was pensive with curious thoughts. She heard Kedzie's childish snivel as she passed. Charity looked up, recognized the girl with difficulty, and after a moment's hesitation called to her:

"What's the matter, you poor child? Come here! What's wrong?"

Kedzie suffered herself to be checked. She dropped on the bench alongside Charity and wailed:

"I fell into that damn' pool, and I've lost my jah-ob!"

Charity patted the shaken back a moment, and said, "But there are other jobs, aren't there?"

"I don't know of any."

"Well, I'll find you one, my dear, if you'll only smile. You have such a pretty smile."

"How do you know?" Kedzie queried, giving her a sample of her best.

Charity laughed. "See! That proves it. You are a darling, and too pretty to lack for a job. Give me your address, and I'll get you a better place than you lost. I promise you."

Kedzie ransacked her hand-bag and found a printed card, crumpled and rouge-stained. She poked it at Charity, who read and commented:

"Miss Anita Adair, eh? Such a pretty name! And the address, my dear—if you don't mind. I am Mrs. Cheever."

"Oh, are you!" Kedzie exclaimed. "I've heard of you. Pleased to meet you."

Then Kedzie whimpered, and Charity wrote the address and repeated her assurances. She also gave Kedzie her own card and asked her to write to her. That seemed to end the interview, and so Kedzie rose and said: "Much obliged. I guess I gotta go now. G'-by!"

"Good-by," said Charity. "I'll not forget you."

Kedzie moved on humbly. She looked back. Charity had fallen again into a listless reverie. She seemed sad. Kedzie wondered what on earth she could have to be sorry about. She had money and a husband, and she was swagger.

Kedzie slipped through the gate out to the road. She did not dare hire a carriage, now that she was jobless. She wished she had not left paradise. But she dared not try to return. She was not "classy" enough. Suddenly a spasm of resentment shook the girl.

She felt the hatred of the rich that always set Tommie Gilfoyle afire. What right had such people to such maj-

esty when Kedzie must walk? What right had they to homes and yards so big that it tired Kedzie out just to trudge past? Who was this Mrs. Cheever, that she should be so top-lofty and bend-downy? Kedzie ground her teeth in anger and tore Charity's card to bits. She flung them at the sea, but the wind brought them back about her face stingingly. She walked on, loathing the very motors that flashed by, flocks of geese squawking contempt.

She walked and walked and walked. The overpowering might of the big houses in their green demesnes made her feel smaller and wearier, but big with bitterness. She would have been glad to have a suit-case full of bombs to blow those snobbish residences into flinders.

She was dog tired when, after losing her way again and again, she reached the boarding-house where the dancers lodged. She packed her things and went to the train, lugging her own baggage. When she reached the station she was footsore, heartsore, soulsore. Her only comfort was that the Silsby dancers had been placed early enough on Mrs. Noxon's program for her to have failed in time to get home the same day. She hated Newport now. It had not been good to her. New York was home once more.

"When's the next train to New York?" she asked a porter.

"It's wint," said the porter. "Wint at four-five."

"I said when's the next train," Kedzie snapped.

"T'-marra' marnin'," said the porter.

"My Gawd!" said Kedzie. "Have I gotta spend the night in this hole?"

The porter stared. He was not used to hearing Mecca called a hole.

"Well, if it's that bad," he grinned, "you might take the five-five to Providence and pick up the six-forty there. But you'll have to git a move on."

Kedzie got a move on. The train swept her out along the edge of Rhode Island. She knew nothing of its heroic

history. She cared nothing for its heroic splendor. She thought of it only as the stronghold of an embattled aristocracy. She did not blame Miss Silsby for her disgrace, nor herself. She blamed the audience, as other actors and authors and politicians do. She blazed with the merciless hatred of the rich that poor people feel when they are thwarted in their efforts to rival or cultivate or sell to the rich. Their own sins they forget as absolved, because the sins have failed. It is the success of sin and the sin of success that cannot be forgiven.

The little dancer whose foot had slipped on the wet marble of wealth was shaken almost to pieces by philosophic vibrations too big for her exquisite frame. They reminded her of her poet, of Tommie Gilfoyle, who was afraid of her and paid court to her. He appeared to her now as a radiant angel of redemption. From Providence she telegraphed him that she would arrive at New York at eleven-fifteen, and he would meet her if he loved her.

This done, she went to the lunch-counter, climbed on a tall stool, and bought herself a cheap dinner. She was paying for it out of her final moneys, and her brain once more told her stomach that it would have to be prudent. She swung aboard the train when it came in, and felt as secure as a lamb with a good shepherd on the horizon. When she grew drowsy she curled up on the seat and slept to perfection.

Her invasion of Newport was over and done—disastrously done, she thought; but its results were just beginning for Jim Dyckman and Charity Coe.

Eventually Kedzie reached the Grand Central Terminal—a much different Kedzie from the one that once followed her father and mother up that platform to that concourse! Her very name was different, and her mind had learned multitudes of things good and bad. She had a young man waiting for her—a poet, a socialist, a worshiper. Her heavy suit-case could not detain her steps. She dragged it as a little sloop drags its anchor in a gale.

Gilfoyle was waiting for her at the barrier. He bent to snatch the suit-case from her and snatched a kiss at the same time. His bravery thrilled her; his gallantry comforted her immeasurably. She was so proud of herself and of him that she wasted never a glance at the powdered gold on the blue ceiling.

"I'm terrible glad to see you, Tommie," she said.

"Are you? Honest?" he chortled.

They jostled into each other and the crowd.

"I'm awful hungry, though," she said, "and I've got oodles of things to tell you."

"Let's eat," he said. They went to the all-night dairy restaurant in the Terminal. He led her to one of the broad-armed chairs and fetched her dainties—a triangle of apple pie, a circle of cruller, and a cylinder of milk.

She leaned across the arm of the chair and told him of her mishaps. He was so enraged that he knocked a plate to the floor. She snatched the cruller off just in time to save it, and the room echoed her laughter.

They talked and talked until she was talked out, and it was midnight. He began to worry about the hour. It was a long ride on the Subway and then a long walk to her boarding-house and then a long walk and a long ride to his.

"I hate to go back to that awful Jambers woman and let her know I'm fired," Kedzie moaned. "My trunk's in storage, anyhow, and maybe she's got no room."

"Why go back?" said Tommie, not realizing the import of his words. It was merely his philosophical habit to ask every custom "Why?"

"Where else is there to go to?" she sighed.

"If we were only married—" he sighed.

"Why, Tommie!"

"As we ought to be!"

"Why, Tommie Gilfoyle!"

And now he was committed. As when he wrote poetry the grappling-hooks of rhyme dragged him into statements

he had not dreamed of at the start and was afraid of at the finish—so now he stumbled into a proposal he could not clamber out of. He must flounder through.

The idea was so deliciously unexpected, so fascinatingly novel to Kedzie, that she fell in love with it. Immediately she would rather have died than remain unmarried to Tommie Gilfoyle.

But there were difficulties.

CHAPTER II

IN the good old idyllic days it had been possible for romantic youth to get married as easily as to get dinner—and as hard to get unmarried as to get wings. Couples who spooned too long at seaside resorts and missed the last train home could wake up a preacher and be united in indissoluble bonds of holy matrimony for two dollars. The preachers of that day slept light, in order to save the reputations of foolish virgins.

But now a greedy and impertinent civil government had stepped in and sacrilegiously insisted on having a license bought and paid for before the Church could officiate. And the license bureau was not open all night, as it should have been.

Kedzie knew nothing of this, but Gilfoyle was informed. Theoretically he believed that marriage should be rendered impossible and divorce easy. But he could no more have proposed an informal alliance with his precious Kedzie than he could have wished that his mother had made one with his father. His mother and father had eloped and been married by a sleepy preacher, but that was poetic and picturesque, seeing that they did not fail to wake the preacher. Gilfoyle's reverence for Kedzie demanded at least as much sanctity about his union with her.

It is curious how habits complicate life. Here were two people whom it would greatly inconvenience to separate. Yet just because it was a custom to close the license bureau in the late afternoon they must wait half a night while the license clerk slept and snored, or played cards

or read detective stories or did whatever license clerks do between midnight and office hours. And just because people habitually crawl into bed and sleep between midnight and forenoon, these two lovers were already finding it hard to keep awake in spite of all their exaltation. They simply must sleep. Romance could wait.

Gilfoyle knew that there were places enough where Kedzie and he could go and have no questions asked except, "Have you got baggage, or will you pay in advance?" But he would not take his Kedzie to any such place, any more than he would leave a chalice in a saloon for safe-keeping.

In their drowsy brains projects danced sparklingly, but they could find nothing to do except to part for the eternity of the remnant of the night. So Gilfoyle escorted Kedzie to the Hotel Belmont door, and told her to say she was an actress arrived on a late train. He stood off at a distance while he saw that she registered and was respectfully treated and led to the elevator by a page.

Then he moved west to the Hotel Manhattan and found shelter. And thus they slept with propriety, Forty-second Street lying between them like a sword.

The alarm-clock in Gilfoyle's head woke him at seven. He hated to interrupt Kedzie's sleep, but he was afraid of his boss and he needed his salary more than ever—twice as much as ever. He telephoned from his room to Kedzie's room down the street and up ten stories and was comforted to find that he woke her out of a sleep so sound that he could hardly understand her words. But he eventually made sure that she would make haste to dress and meet him in the restaurant.

They breakfasted together at half past eight. Kedzie was aglow with the whole procedure.

"You ought to write a novel about us," she told Gilfoyle. "It would be a lot better than most of the awful stories folks write nowadays. And you'd make a million

dollars, I bet. We need a lot of money now, too, don't we?"

"A whole lot," said Gilfoyle, who was beginning to fret over the probable cost of the breakfast.

It cost more than he expected—as he expected. But he was in for it, and he trusted that the Lord would provide. They bought a ring at a petty jewelry-shop in Forty-second Street and then descended to a Subway express and emerged at the Brooklyn Bridge Station.

The little old City Hall sat among the overtowering buildings like an exquisite kitten surrounded by mastiffs, but Gilfoyle's business took him and his conquest into the enormous Municipal Building, whose windy arcades blew Kedzie against him with a pleasant clash.

The winds of life indeed had blown them together as casually as two leaves met in the same gutter. But they thought it a divine encounter arranged from eons back and to continue for eons forward. They thought it so at that time.

They went up in the elevator to the second floor, where, in the fatal Room 258, clerks at several windows vended for a dollar apiece the State's permission to experiment with matrimony.

There was a throng ahead of them—brides, grooms, parents, and witnesses of various nationalities. All of them looked shabby and common, even to Kedzie in her humility. All over the world couples were mating, as the birds and animals and flowers and chemicals mate in their seasons. The human pairs advertised their union by numberless rites of numberless religions and non-religions. The presence or absence of rite or its nature seemed to make little difference in the prosperity of the emulsion. The presence or absence of romance seemed to make little difference, either. But it seemed to be generally agreed upon as a policy around the world that marriage should be made exceedingly easy, and unmarriage exceedingly difficult. In recruiting armies the same plan is observed;

every encouragement is offered to enlist; one has only to step in off the street and enlist. But getting free! That is not the object of the recruiting business.

Gilfoyle and Kedzie had to wait their turns before they could reach a window. Then they had a cross-examination to face.

Kedzie giggled a good deal, and she leaned softly against the hard shoulder of Gilfoyle while the clerk quizzed him as to his full name, color, residence, age, occupation, birthplace, the name of his father and mother and the country of their birth, and the number of his previous marriages.

She grew abruptly solemn when the clerk looked at her for answers to the same questions on her part; for she realized that she was expected to tell her real name and her parents' real names. She would have to confess to Tommie that she had deceived him and cheated him out of a beautiful poem. Had he known the truth he would never have written:

> Pretty maid, pretty maid, may I call you Kedzie?
> Your last name is Thropp, but your first name is—

Nothing rhymed with *Kedzie*.

While she gaped, wordless, Gilfoyle magnificently spoke for her, proudly informed the clerk that her name was "Anita Adair," that she was white (he nearly said "pink"), that her age was—he had to ask that, and she told him nineteen. He gave her residence as New York and her occupation as "none."

"What is your father's first name, honey?" he said, a little startled to realize how little he knew of her or her past. She had learned much news of him, too, in hearing his own answers.

"Adna," she whispered, and he told the clerk that her father's name was Adna Adair. She told the truth about her mother's maiden name. She could afford to do that, and she could honestly aver that she had never had any husband or husbands "up to yet," and that she had not

been divorced "so far." Also both declared that they knew of no legal impediment to their marriage. There are so few legal impediments to marriage, and so many to the untying of the knot into which almost anybody can tie almost anybody!

The clerk's facile pen ran here and there, and the license was delivered at length on the payment of a dollar. For one almighty dollar the State gave the two souls permission to commit mutual mortgage for life.

Gilfoyle was growing nervous. He told Kedzie that he was expected at the office. There were several advertisements to write for the next day's papers, and he had given the firm no warning of what he had not foreseen the day before. If they hunted for a preacher, Gilfoyle would get into trouble with Mr. Kiam.

If they had listened to the excellent motto, "Business before pleasure," they might never have been married. That would have saved them a vast amount of heartache, both blissful and hateful. But they were afraid to postpone their nuptials. The mating instinct had them in its grip.

They fretted awhile in the hurlyburly of other love-mad couples and wondered what to do. Gilfoyle finally pushed up to one of the windows again and asked:

"What's the quickest way to get married? Isn't there a preacher or alderman or something handy?"

"Aldermen are not allowed to marry folks any more," he was told. "But the City Clerk will hitch you up for a couple of dollars. The marriage-room is right up-stairs."

This seemed the antipodes of romance and Gilfoyle hesitated to decide.

But Kedzie, knowing his religious ardor against religions, said:

"What's the diff? I don't mind."

Gilfoyle smiled at last, and the impatient lovers hurried out into the corridor. They would not wait for the elevator, but ran up the steps. They passed a trio of

youth, a girl and two young fellows. One of the lads gave the other a shove that identified the bridegroom. The girl was holding her left hand up and staring at her new ring. A pessimist might have seen a portent in the cynical amusement of her smile, and another in the aweless speed with which Gilfoyle and Kedzie hustled toward the awful mystery of such a union as marriage attempts.

The wedlock-factory was busy. In spite of the earliness of the hour the waiting-room was crowded, its benches full. The only place for Kedzie to sit was next to a couple of negroes, the man in Ethiopian foppery grinning up into the face of a woman who held his hat and cane, and simpered in ebony.

Kedzie whispered to Gilfoyle her displeased surprise: "Why, they act just like we do."

Kedzie liked to use *like* like that. She felt belittled at sharing with such people an emotion that seemed to her far too good for them. Also she felt that the emotion itself was cheapened by such company. She wished she had not consented to the marriage. But it would excite attention to back out now, and the dollar already invested would be wasted. For all she knew, the purchase of the license compelled the completion of the project.

A group of Italians came from Room 365—two girls in white, a bareheaded mother who had been weeping, a fat and relieved-looking father, an insignificant youth who was unquestionably the new-born husband.

Gilfoyle kept looking at his watch, but he had to wait his turn. There was a book to be signed and a two-dollar bill to be paid. At last, when the negro pair came forth chuckling, Kedzie and Gilfoyle rushed into the so-called "chapel" to meet their fate.

The chapel was a barrenly furnished office. Its nearest approach to an altar was a washstand with hot and cold running water. At the small desk the couple stood while the City Clerk read the pledge drawn up in the Corpora-

tion Counsel's office with a sad mixture of religious, legal, and commercial cant:

"In the name of God, Amen.

"Do either of you know of any impediment why you should not be legally joined together in matrimony, or if any one present can show any just cause why these parties should not be legally joined together in matrimony let them now speak or hereafter hold their peace.

"Do you, Thomas Gilfoyle, take this woman as your lawfully wedded wife, to live together in the state of matrimony? Will you love, honor, and keep her, as a faithful man is bound to do, in health, sickness, prosperity, and adversities, and forsaking all others keep you alone unto her as long as you both shall live?

"Do you, Anita Adair, take this man for your lawfully wedded husband to live together in the state of matrimony? Will you love, honor, and cherish him as a faithful woman is bound to do, in health, sickness, prosperity, and adversities, and forsaking all others keep you alone unto him as along as you both shall live?

"For as both have consented in wedlock and have acknowledged same before this company I do by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of New York now pronounce you husband and wife.

"And may God bless your union."

The City Clerk had to furnish witnesses from his own staff while he administered the secular rites and exacted the solemn promises which so few have kept, and invoked the help of God which is so rarely manifest or so subtly hidden, in the human-animal-angel relation of marriage.

And now Anita Adair and Thomas Gilfoyle were officially welded into one. They had received the full franchise each of the other's body, soul, brain, time, temper, liberty, leisure, admiration, education, past, future, health, wealth, strength, weakness, virtue, vice, destructive power, procreative power, parental gift or lack, domestic or bedouin genius, prejudice, inheritance—all.

It was a large purchase for three dollars, and it remained to be seen whether either or both delivered the goods. At the altar of Hymen, Kedzie had publicly vowed to love,

honor, and cherish under all circumstances. It was like swearing to walk in air or water as well as on earth. The futile old oath to "obey" had been omitted as a perjury enforced.

Kedzie Thropp, who had come to New York only a few months before, had done one more impulsive thing. First she had run away from her parents. Now she had run away from herself. She had loved New York first. Now she was infatuated with Tommie Gilfoyle. He was as complex and mysterious a city as Manhattan. She would be as long in reaching the heart of him.

There had been no bridesmaids to give the scene social grace, no music or flowers to give it poetry, no minister to give it an odor of sanctity. It was marriage in its cold, business-like actuality, without hypnotism, superstition, or false pretense. Small wonder that Kedzie had hardly left the marriage-room before she felt that she was not married at all. The vaccination had not taken. She was not one with Gilfoyle. And yet she must pretend that she was. She must act as if they were one soul, one flesh; must share his tenement, his food, his joys and anxieties. Of these last there promised to be no famine.

Gilfoyle was in a panic about his office. He told Kedzie to devote the morning to looking up some place to live. He would join her at luncheon. He fidgeted while they waited for the elevator, Kedzie staring at her ring with the same curious smile as the other girl.

CHAPTER III

THEY rode up-town in a Subway express to Forty-second Street. Their first business treaty had to be drawn up in the crowd.

"How much do you want to pay for the flat, honey?" said Kedzie.

Gilfoyle was startled. Already the money-snake was in their Eden. And she asked him how much he "wanted" to pay! It was only a form of speech, but it grated on him.

"I haven't time to figure it out," he fretted. "I get twenty-five dollars a week—darling. That's a hundred a month—dear." His pet names came afterward, mere trailers. "Out of that we've got to get something to eat and to wear, and there'll be street-car fare to pay and—tooth-powder to buy, and we'll want something for theater tickets, and—" He was aghast at the multitude of things married people need. He added, "And we ought to save a little, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said Kedzie, who was as much taken aback by the mention of economy at such a time as he was by the mention of expenditure. But she rose bravely to the responsibility: "I'll do the best I can, and we'll be so cozy—ooh!"

Kedzie was used to small figures. He put into her hand all the cash he had with him, which was all he had on earth—forty-two dollars. He borrowed back the two dollars. Kedzie had her own money, about forty more dollars. This, with twenty-five dollars a week, seemed big enough to her to keep them in luxury. They parted at the Grand Central Terminal with looks of devoted agony.

She set out at once to look at flats and to visit furniture-stores. She bought a *Herald* and read the numberless advertisements. Something was the matter everywhere. She had gone far and found nothing but discouragement when the luncheon hour arrived.

Humble as her ideas were, they rebelled at what she and her bridegroom would have to accept for their home. She had always dreamed of marrying a beautiful man with a million dollars and a steam yacht. She was to have been married by a swagger parson, in a swagger church, and to have gone on a long voyage somewhere, and come back at last to a castle on Fifth Avenue. She had lost the parson; the voyage was not to be thought of; and the castle was not even in the air.

She looked at one or two expensive apartments, just to see what real apartments could be like. They stunned her with their splendors, their liveried outguards, their elevators clanking like caparisoned chariot-horses, their conveniences, their rentals—six or eight thousand dollars a year, unfurnished!—six or seven times her husband's whole annual earnings. They were beyond the folly of a dream.

She would have to be content with what one could rent furnished for twenty-five dollars a month. She would have to be her own hired girl. She would have to toil in a few cells of a beehive on a side-street. She would be chauffeuse to a gas-stove only.

She went to the luncheon tryst with a load of forebodings, but Gilfoyle did not appear. She heard her name paged by a corridor-crier and was called to the telephone, where her husband's voice told her that there was a big upset at the office and he dared not leave. He forgot to be tender in his endearments, and he forgot to explain to her that he was talking in a crowded office with an impatient boss waiting for him and a telephone-girl probably listening in.

Kedzie lunched alone, already a business man's wife.

She scoured the town all afternoon, and at last, in desperation, took the furnished flat she happened to be in when she could go no farther. She had to sign a year's lease, and pay twenty-five dollars in advance.

They would live a condensed life there. Even the hall was shared with another family. The secrets were also to be shared, evidently, for Kedzie could hear all that went on in the other home—all, all!

But by this time she was so tired that any cranny would have been welcome. She was even wearier than she had been when she occupied the outdoor apartment under the park bench where she spent her second night in New York. She called that an "aparkment" and liked the pun so well that she longed to tell her husband. But that would have compelled the telling of her real name, and she did not know him well enough for that yet. She found that she did not know him well enough yet for an increasing number of things. She began to be afraid to have him come home. What would he be like as a husband? What would she be like as a wife? Those are all-important facts that one is permitted to learn after the vows of perfection are sealed.

When Kedzie had rested awhile she grew braver and lonelier. She would welcome almost any husband for companionship's sake. She resolved to have Tom's dinner ready for him. She dragged herself down the stairs and up the hill to the grocer's and the butcher's and bought the raw material for dinner and breakfast.

She telephoned Gilfoyle at his office, gave him the address and invited him to dine with "Mrs. Gilfoyle." She chuckled over the romance of it, but he was harrowed with office troubles. Her ardor was a trifle dampened by his voice, but she found new thrills in the gas-stove, a most dramatic instrument to play. It frightened her with every manifestation. She turned the wrong handles and got bad odors from it, and explosions. She burned her fingers and the chops.

She stared in dismay at the charred first banquet and then marched her weary feet down the stairs again and up the hill again to a delicatessen shop. She had previously learned the fatal ease of the ready-made meals they vend at such places, and she compiled her first menu there.

When Gilfoyle came down the street and up the steps into his new home and into her arms he tried to lay off care for a while. But he could not hide his anxiety—and his ecstasy was half an ecstasy of dread.

He did not like the shabby, showy furniture the landlord had selected. But the warmed-up dinner amazed him. He had not imagined Kedzie so scholarly a cook. She dared not tell him that she had cheated. He found her wonderfully refreshing after a day of office toil and told her how happy they would be, and she said, "You bet." Kedzie cleared the table by scooping up all the dishes and dumping them into a big pan and turning the hot water into it with a cake of soap. Then she retreated to the wabbly divan in the living-room.

Gilfoyle went over to Kedzie like a lonely hound; and she laced still tighter the arms that encircled her. They told each other that they were all they had in the world, and they forgot the outside world for the world within themselves. But the evening was maliciously hot and muggy; it was going to rain in a day or so. That divan would hardly support two, and there was no comfort in sitting close; it merely added two furnaces together.

Clamor rose in the adjoining apartment. Their neighbors had children, and the children did not want to go to bed. The parents nagged the children and each other. The wrangle was insufferable. And the idea came to Kedzie and Gilfoyle that children were one of the liabilities of their own marriage. They were afraid of each other, now, as well as of the world. If only they had not been in such haste to be married! If only they could recall those hasty words!

Gilfoyle put out the lights—"because they draw the insects," he said, but Kedzie thought that he was beginning to economize. He was. Across the street they could see other heat-victims miserably preparing for the night. They were careless of appearances.

In the back of the parlor was a window opening into a narrow air-shaft. The one bedroom's one window opened on the same cleft. If the curtain were not kept down the neighbors across the area could see and be seen. If the window were left open they could be heard; and when the curtain flapped in the occasional little puffs of hot air, it gave brief glimpses of family life next door. That family had a squalling child, too. Somewhere above, a rickety phonograph was at work; and somewhere below, a piano was being mauled; and somewhere else a ukelele was being thumped and a doleful singer was snarling "The Beach at Waikiki." This racket was their only epithalamium. It was more like the "chivaree" with which ironic crowds tormented bridal couples back in Nimrim, Mo.

Gilfoyle was poet enough to enjoy a little extra doldrums at what might have made a longshoreman peevish. He mopped sweat and fanned himself with a newspaper till he grew frantic. He flung down the paper and rose with a yawn.

"Well, this is one helluva honeymoon. I'm going to crawl into the oven and fry."

Kedzie sat alone in the dark parlor a long while. She was cold now. She had danced Greek dances in public, but she blushed in the dark as she loitered over her shoelaces. She was so forlorn and so disappointed with life that tears would have been bliss.

Somebody on that populous, mysterious air-shaft kept a parrot. It woke Kedzie early in the morning with hysterical laughter that pierced the ears like steel saws. There was something uncannily real but hideously mirthless in its Ha-ha-ha! It would gurgle with thick-tongued

idiocy: "Polly? Polly? Polly wanny clacky? Polly? Polly?"

Kedzie wondered how any one could care or dare to keep such a pest. She wanted to kill it. She leaned out of the window and stared up. Somewhere above the fire-escape rungs she could see the bottom of its cage. If only she had a gun, how gladly she would have blown Polly to bits.

She saw a frowsy-haired man in a nightgown staring up from another window and yelling at the parrot. She drew her head in hastily.

The idol of her soul slept on. The inpouring day illumined him to his disadvantage. His head was far back, his jaw down, his mouth agape. During the night a beard had crept out on his cheeks. He was startlingly unattractive.

Kedzie crouched on the bed and stared at him in wonder, in a fascination of disgust. This was the being she had selected from all mankind for her companion through the long, long years to come. This was her playmate, partner, hero, master, financier, bedfellow, lifefellow. For him she had given up her rights to freedom, to praise, to chivalry, to individuality, her hopes of wealth, luxury, flattery.

She glanced about the room—the pine bureau with its imitation stain, broken handles, and curdled mirror, the ugly chairs, the gilt radiator, the worn rug, the bed that other wretches had occupied. She wondered who they were and where they were.

She remembered Newport, the Noxon home. She tried to picture a bedroom there. She saw a palace of the best moving-picture period. She remembered the first moving picture she had seen in New York, and contrasted the Anita Adair of that adventure with the Anita Adair of this. She recalled that girl locking her door against the swell husband, and the poor but honest lover with the revolver.

Kedzie wished she had locked her own door—only there was no door, merely a shoddy portière, for there was not room to open a door. Her old ambitions came back to her. She had planned to know rich people and rebuke their wicked wiles. One rich man had held her in his arms, lifted her out of the pool. It was no less a man than Jim Dyckman, and she had repulsed him.

She caught a glimpse of her own tousled head in the mirror, and she sneered at it. "You darn fool—oh, you darn fool!"

At last the parrot woke Gilfoyle. He snorted, bored his fists into his eyes, yawned, scratched his head, stared at the unusual furniture, flounced over, saw his mate, stared again, grinned, said:

"Why, hello, Anita!"

He put out his hand to her. She wiggled away; he followed. She slid to the floor and gasped:

"Don't touch me!"

"Why, what's the matter, honey?"

"Huh! What isn't the matter?"

He fumbled under the pillow for his watch, looked at it, yawned:

"Lord, it's only five o'clock. Good *night!*" He disposed himself for sleep again. The parrot broke out in another horrible Ha-ha! He sat up with an oath. "I'd like to murder the beast."

"Don't! I'm much obliged to it."

"Obliged to it? You must be crazy. Good Lord! hear it scream."

"Well, ain't life a scream?"

Gilfoyle was a graceless sleeper and a surly waker. He forgot that he was a bridegroom.

He sniffed, yawned, flopped, buried one ear in the pillow and pulled the cover over the other and almost instantly slept. His head on the pillow looked like some ugly, shaggy vegetable. Kedzie wanted to uproot the object and throw it out of the window, out of her life. That

was the head of her husband, the lord and master of her dreams!

Dainty-minded couples have separate bedrooms. Ordinary people accept the homely phases of coexistence as inevitable and therefore unimportant. They grow to enjoy the intimacy: they give and take informality as one of the comforts of a home. They see frowsy hair and unshaven cheeks and yawns as a homely, wholesome part of life and make a pleasant indolence of them.

But Kedzie was in an unreasoning mood. She had hoped for unreasonable delights. Marriage had been a goal beyond the horizon, at the base of the rainbow. She had reached it. The girl Kedzie was no more. She was a wife. Kedzie Thropp and Anita Adair were now Mrs. Thomas Gilfoyle. Her soul cried out:

"This is my honeymoon! I am married, married forever to that tousle-headed, bristle-jawed, brainless, heartless dub. I won't stand for it. I won't! I won't!"

She wanted to outscream the parrot. Its inarticulate, horrible cachinnations voiced her humor uncannily. She had to bury her pouting lips in her round young arm to keep from insanely echoing that maniacal Ha-ha-ha! That green-and-red philosopher expressed her own mockery of life and love, with its profound and eloquent Ha-ha-ha! Oh, ha-ha-ha! Ee, ha-ha-ha!

CHAPTER IV

NOW, of course, Kedzie ought to have been happy. Millions of girls of her age were waking up that morning and calling themselves wretched because their parents or distance or some other cause prevented them from marrying young fellows no more prepossessing asleep than Gilfoyle was.

In Europe that morning myriads of young girls tossed in their beds and shivered lest their young men in the trenches might have been killed or mangled by some shell dropped from an airship or sent over from a cannon or shot up from a mine. And those young men, alive or dead, looked no better than Gilfoyle, if as neat.

In Europe and in Asia, that morning, there were young girls and nuns and wives who were in the power of foreign soldiers whose language they could not speak but could understand all too well—poor, ruined victims of the tidal waves of battle. There were wives, young and old, who had got their husbands back from war blind, crippled, foolish, petulant. They had left part of their souls on the field with their blood.

It was a time when it seemed that nobody had a right to be unhappy who had life, health, shelter, and food. Yet America was perhaps as discontented as Europe.

Kedzie had reason enough to make peace with life. Gilfoyle was as valuable a citizen as she. She might have helped to make him a good business man or a genuine poet. What is poetry, anyway, but the skilful advertisement of emotions? She might at least have made of Gilfoyle that all-important element of the Republic, a

respectable, amiable, ordinary man, perhaps the father of children who would be of value, even of glory, to the world.

There was romance enough in their wedding. Others of the couples who had bought licenses that day were rapturous in yet cheaper tenements, greeting the new day with laughter and kisses and ambition to earn and to save, to breed and grow old well.

But to be content with what or whom she had, Kedzie would have had to be somebody else besides Kedzie; and then Gilfoyle would not perhaps have met her or married her. Some man in Nimrim, Mo., would have wed the little stay-at-home.

Kedzie, the pretty fool, apparently fancied that she would have been happy if Gilfoyle had been a handsomer sleeper, and the apartment a handsomer apartment, and the bank-account an inexhaustible fountain of gold.

But would she have been? Peter Cheever was as handsome as a man dares to be, awake or asleep; he had vast quantities of money, and he was generous with it. But Zada L'Etoile was not happy. She dwelt in an apartment that would have overwhelmed Kedzie by the depth of its velvets and the height of its colors.

Yet Zada was crying this very morning—crying like mad because while she had Cheever she had no marriage license. She tore her hair and bit it, and peeled diamonds off her fingers and threw them at the mirror like pebbles, and sopped up her tears with point-lace handkerchiefs and hurled those to the floor—then hurled herself after them. She was a tremendous weeper, Zada.

And in Newport there was a woman who had a marriage license but no husband. She slept in a room too beautiful for Kedzie to have liked. She did not know enough to like it. She would have found it cold. Charity Cheever found it cold, but she slept at last, though the salt wind blowing in from the sea tormented the light curtains and plucked at the curls about Charity's face. There was salt

in the air, and her eyelashes were still wet with tears. She was crying in her sleep, for loneliness.

Kedzie thought her room was small, but it was nearly as big as the bedroom where Jim Dyckman had slept. He had a bigger room, but he had given it to his father and mother, who had come to Newport with him. They were a stodgy old couple enough now, and snoring idyllically in duet after a life of storms and tears and discontents in spite of wealth.

Jim's room was big for a yacht, but the yacht was narrow, built for speed. Thirty-six miles an hour its turbines could shoot it through the sea. It had to be narrow. We can't have everything—especially on yachts.

Jim was barefoot, standing in his pajamas at a port-hole and trying to see the Noxon home, imagining Charity there. He was denied her presence and was as miserable as any waif in a poor farm attic. Money seemed to make no visible difference in his despair.

If he thought of Kedzie at all, he dismissed her as a trifling memory. He wanted Charity, who did not want him. Charity had Cheever, who did not want her. Kedzie had Gilfoyle, and did not want him. It looked as if the old jingle ought to be changed from "Finders keepers, losers weepers" to "Losers keepers, finders weepers."

The day after Jim Dyckman pulled Kedzie out of the water he made a desperate effort to convince himself that he could be happy without the forbidden Charity Coe.

He breakfasted and played tennis, then swam at Bailey's Beach. Beauties of every type and every conscience were there—pale, slim ash blondes with legs like banister-spindles, and swarthy, slender brunettes of the same Sheraton furniture. There were brunettes of generous ovals, and blondes of heroic rotundities, and every scheme of shape between. Minds were equally diversified—maternal young girls and wicked old ladies,

hilarious and sinister, intellectual and athletic, bookish and horsy, a woman of a sort for every mood.

And Jim Dyckman was so wealthy and so simple and so likable and important that it seemed nobody would refuse to accept him. But he wanted Charity.

Later in the afternoon he gave up the effort to snub her and went to the Noxon home. It was about the hour when Kedzie in her new flat had been burning her fingers at the gas-stove. Jim Dyckman was preparing to burn his fingers at the shrine of Mrs. Cheever.

He rang the bell and asked for Mrs. Noxon, though her motor was waiting at the door, as he was glad to note. Mrs. Noxon came down with her hat on and her gloves going on. She pinched Dyckman's cheek and kissed him and said:

"It's sweet of you, Jimmie, to call on an old crone like me, and so promptly. She'll be down in a minute. But you must be on your good behavior, Jim, for they're talking about you, you know. They're bracketing your name with Charity's."

"The dirty beasts! I'll—"

"You can't, Jim. But you can behave. Cheer her up a little. She's blue about that dog of a Cheever. I've got to go and turn over the money we earned yesterday. Quite a tidy sum, but I'll never give another damned show as long as I live."

She left, and by and by Charity Coe drifted in, bringing strange contentment with her. She greeted Jim with a weary cordiality. He took her hand and kissed it and laid his other hand over it as usual. She put her other hand on top of his and patted it—then withdrew her slender fingers and sat down.

They glanced at each other and sighed. Jim was miserably informed now that he had made the angelic Charity Coe a theme for gossip. He felt guilty—irritatedly guilty, because he had the name without the game.

Charity Coe was in a dull mood. She was in a love

lethargy. Her mind was trying to persuade her heart that her devotion to Peter Cheever was a wasted lealty, but her heart would not be convinced, though it began to be afraid. She was as a watcher who sits in the next room to one who is dying slowly and quietly. She could neither lose hope nor use it.

Jim and Charity sat brooding for a long while. He had outstretched himself on a sumptuous divan. She was seated on a carved chair, leaning against the tall back of it like a figure in high relief. About them the great room brooded colossally.

Gilfoyle would have hated Charity and Jim as perfect examples of the idle rich, too stupid to work, too pampered to be worthy of sympathy. But whether these two had a right to suffer or not, suffer they did.

The mansion was quiet. The other house-guests were motoring or darting about the twilit tennis-court or trading in the gossip-exchange at the Casino. Jim and Charity were marooned in a sleeping castle.

At length Jim broke forth, "For God's sake, sing."

Charity laughed a little and said, "All right—anything to make you talk."

She went to the piano and shifted the music. There were dozens of songs about roses. She dropped to the bench and began to play and croon Edward Carpenter's luscious music to Waller's old poem, "Go, Lovely Rose."

Jim began to talk almost at once. Charity went on singing, smiling a little at the familiar experience of being asked to sing only to be talked over. Jim grew garrulous as he read across her shoulder with characteristic impoliteness.

"*Tell her that wastes her time and me,*" he quoted; then he groaned: "That's you and me, Charity Coe. But you're wasting yourself most of all."

He bent closer to peek at the name of the author. "Who's this feller Waller, who knows so much?"

"Hush and listen," she said, and hummed the song

through. It made a new and deep impression on her in that humor. She felt that she had wasted the rosiness of her own life. Girlhood was gone; youth was gone; carefreedom was gone. Like petals they had fallen from the core of her soul. The words of the lyric stabbed her:

> Then die that she
> The common fate of all things rare
> May read in thee.
> How small a part of time they share
> That are so sweet and fair.

Her fingers slipped from the keys and, as it were, died in her lap. Jim Dyckman understood a woman for once, and in a gush of pity for her and of resentment for her disprized preciousness caught at her to embrace her. Her hands came to life. The wifely instinct leaped to the fore. She struck and wrenched and drove him off. She was panting with wrath.

"What a rotten thing to do! Go away and don't come near me again. I'm ashamed of you."

"Me, too," he snarled.

CHAPTER V

JIM slunk out and slunk down the marble steps and down the winding walk and through the monstrous gate into the highway along the sea, enraged at himself and at Charity and at Peter Cheever. If he had met Cheever he would have picked him up and flung him over the sea-wall. But there was little danger of Peter Cheever's being found so near his wife.

"*Tell her that wastes her time and me,*" kept running through Jim's head. He was furious at Charity for wasting so much of him. He had followed her about and moped at her closed door like a stray dog. And she had never even thrown him a bone.

A wave ran up on the beach and seemed to try to embrace the earth, possess it. But it fell away baffled. Over its subsiding pother sprang a new wave with the same bosomful of desire and the same frantic clutching here and there—the same rebuff, the same destruction under the surge of the next and the next. The descending night gave a strange pathos to the eternal vanity.

Jim Dyckman stood and faced the ocean. Once more he discovered that life was too much for him to understand. He was ashamed of himself for his vain endeavor to envelop Charity Coe and absorb her into the deeps of his love. He was most ashamed because he had failed and must slither back into the undertow with the many other men whom Charity had refused to love.

He was ashamed of Charity Coe, too, for squandering her prime and her pride. He was enraged at her blindness to Pete Cheever's duplicity or her complacency with it.

He hated Charity for a while—nearly. At any rate he was ashamed of her, ashamed of the world, in a rebel mood.

As he stood wind-blown and spray-flogged and glad to be beaten, a shabby old carriage went by. It was piled to overflowing with some of Miss Silsby's girls taking a seeing-Newport tour on the cheap.

The driver was, or said he had been in his time, coachman to some of the oldest families. He ventured their names with familiarity and knew their houses by heart. He told quaint stories of their ways, how old Mrs. Noxon once swore down a mutinous stableman, how Miss Wossom ran away with her coachman. There was something finely old-fashioned and conservative about that. A new-rich would have run away with a chauffeur.

The driver knew Jim Dyckman's back and pointed him out. The girls laughed, remembering Kedzie's encounter with him. They laughed so loud that Dyckman turned, startled by the racket. But the carriage rolled them away and he did not hear them wondering what had become of Kedzie. The gloaming saddened them, and they felt very sorry for her. But Jim Dyckman gave her no thought.

He was tearing apart his emotions toward Charity and resolving that he must never see her again. In the analytical chemistry of the soul he found that this resolution was three parts hopelessness of winning her, three parts a decent sense of the wickedness of courting another man's woman, three parts resentment at her for treating him properly, and one part a feeling that he would make himself most valuable to her by staying away.

Never a homeless dog slinking through an alley in search of a sidelong ash-barrel to sleep in felt more poverty-stricken, woebegone, than Jim Dyckman. He moped along the stately road, as much afraid of his future as Kedzie had been, trudging the same highway. She had wondered if board and lodging would fail her. This was

not Jim Dyckman's fear, but his own was as great, for everybody was some dreadful elbow-companion.

Lucian showed Jupiter himself cowering on his throne in the sky and twiddling his thunderbolt with trembling hand as he wondered what the fates held in store for him, and saw on earth the increasing impudence of the skeptics.

So Jim Dyckman, unconscious that he was following in Kedzie's footsteps, walked miserably on his way. He had no place to go to but the finest yacht in the harbor. He had no money to depend on but a few millions of his own and the Pelion plus Ossa fortunes of his father and mother and their relatives—a mere sierra of gold mountains.

He drifted down to the landing-place and went out to his yacht in a hackney launch. He was received at her snowy sides as if he were the emperor of somewhere come to visit one of his rear admirals. He went up the steps as if he were a school-boy caught playing hooky and going up-stairs to play the bass drum to his mother's slipper.

His mother was on the shade-deck, reclining. The big white wicker lounge looked as if a small avalanche had fallen on it. From the upturned points of her white shoes back to her white hair she was a study in foreshortening that would have interested a draftsman.

Spread out on a huge wicker arm-chair sat Jim's father, also all white, except for his big pink hands and his big pink face. It seemed that he ought to have been smoking a white cigar. As a matter of fact, he had sat so still that half the weed was ash.

When the two moved to greet Jim there was a mighty creaking of wicker. There was another when Jim spilled his own great weight into a chair. A steward in white raised his eyebrows inquiringly and Jim nodded the eighth of an inch. It was the equivalent of ordering a drink.

Dyckman senior turned to Dyckman seniora and said.

"Enter Hamlet in the graveyard! Where's the skull, my boy, where's the skull?"

"Let the child alone," Mrs. Dyckman protested. "It's too hot for fooling. You might kiss your poor mother, though. No, don't get up, just throw me one."

Jim rose heavily, went to her, bent far down, kissed her, and would have risen again, but her big arms encompassed his neck and held him, uncomfortably, till he knelt by her side and laid his head on her bosom.

He felt exceedingly foolish, but nearer to comfort than he had been for a long while. He wished that he might be a boy again in his mother's arms and be altogether content and carefree as he had been there. As if children were content and carefree! Great Heavens! do they not begin to squirm and kick before they are born?

Mrs. Dyckman was suffocated a trifle by his weight and her own and her corsets, but her heart ached for him somewhere down deep and she whispered:

"Can't he tell his mother what he wants? Maybe she can get it for him."

He laughed bitterly and extricated himself from her clasp, patted her fat arm, and turned away. His father jealously seized his sleeve.

"Anything serious, old man? You know I'm here."

Jim squeezed his father's hand and shook his head and turned to the drink which had arrived. He took it from the tray to his chair and sat meditating Newport across the top of his glass. Between the rail of the deck and the edge of the awning he saw a long slice of it. It was vanity and emptiness to him. He spoke at length.

"Fact is, folks, I've got to go back to New York or somewhere."

"Good Lord!" his father said. "I'm all mixed up in a golf tournament. I think I've got a chance to lick the boots off old Wainwright."

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. Dyckman, "there's to be the most interesting lecture by that Hindu poet. And it's so

much more comfortable here than ashore. This boat is the coziest you've ever had."

"Stay here, darling," said Jim. "I'll make you a present of her."

"Oh, that's glorious," said Mrs. Dyckman. "I've never had a yacht of my own. It's a shame to take it from you, but you can get another. And of course you'll always be welcome here—which is more than a certain other big Dyckman will be if he doesn't look sharp."

"For the Lord's sake, Jim, don't give it to her. She's the meanest old miser about her own things." Dyckman senior pushed his chair back against the rail.

"Watch out!" Mrs. Dyckman gasped. "You're scraping the paint off my yacht."

Jim rose again. "I've just about time to make the last train for the day," he said.

His mother sat up and clutched at his hand. "Can't I help you, honey? Please let me! What is the matter?"

"The matter is I'm a lunkhead and Newport bores me stiff. That's all. Don't worry. I'll go get the packing started."

He went along the deck, and his parents helplessly craned their necks after him. His father groaned. Jim had "everything." There was nothing to get for him, no toy to buy to divert him with.

"He wants a new toy, and he doesn't know what it is," said the old man.

But Jim wanted an old toy on a shelf too high for his reach. He ran away from the sight of it.

And Dyckman was fleeing to Charity's next resting-place, after all, for she also returned in a few days to New York. She was restive under the goad to return to France. She repented her selfish neglect of the children of all ages she had adopted abroad. One thing held her back—the dread of putting the ocean again between her and her husband.

She thought it small of her to leave so many heroes to suffer without her ministrations, in order that she might prevent one non-hero from having too good a time without her ministrations. But womankind has never been encouraged to adopt the policy of the greatest good to the greatest number. Hardly!

Charity was conscience-smitten, however, and she cast about for a way to absolve herself. Money is the old and ever-reliable way of paying debts physical, moral, and religious. Charity determined to arrange some big fête to bring in a heap of money for the wounded of France, the blind fathers, and the fatherless children.

Everybody was giving entertainments at this time in behalf of some school of victims of the war. The only excuse for amusements in America seemed to be that the profits went to the belligerents in one way or another.

Charity was distressed by the need of an oddity, a novel note which should make itself heard among the clamors for Belgian relief, for Polish relief, for Armenian succor, for German, French, Italian, Russian widows and orphans.

Charity's secretary, Miss Gurdon, made dozens of suggestions, but none of them was big enough to interest Charity. One day a card came up to her with a letter of introduction from Mrs. Noxon:

CHARITY DEAR,—This will acquaint you with a very clever girl, Miss Grace Havender. Her mother was a school friend of mine. Miss Havender arranges to have moving pictures taken of people. They are ever so much quainter than stupid still-life pictures. Posterity ought to see you with your poor wounded soldiers, but meanwhile we really should have a chance to perpetuate you as you are. You are always on the go, and an ordinary picture does not represent you.

Anyway, you will be nice to Miss Havender, for the sake of

Yours affectionately,

MARTHA NOXON.

Charity did not want a picture of herself, but she went down to get rid of Miss Havender politely and to

recommend her to friends of greater passion for their own likenesses. Miss Havender was a forward young person and launched at once into a defense of moving pictures.

"Oh, I admire the movies immensely," Charity interposed. "We had some of them in the hospitals abroad. If you could have seen that dear Charlie Chaplin convulse a whole ward of battered soldiers and make them forget their pain and their anxieties! He was more of a nurse than a hundred of us. If he isn't a benefactor, I don't know who is. Oh, I admire the movies, but I'd rather see them than be them, you know.

"Still, an idea has just occurred to me. You know I'm terribly in need of a pile of money."

Miss Havender looked about her and smiled.

"Oh, I don't mean for myself. I have far too much, but for the soldiers. I want something that will bring in a big sum. It occurs to me that if a lot of us got up a story and acted it ourselves, it would be tremendously interesting to—well, to ourselves. And our friends would flock to see it. Amateur performances are ghastly from an artistic standpoint, but they're great fun.

"It just struck me that if we got up a play and had a cast made up of Mr. Jim Dyckman and Tom Duane and Winnie Nicolls and Miss Bettany and the young Stowe Webbs and Mrs. Neff and people like that it would be dreadfully bad art, but much more amusing than if we had all the stars in the world—Mr. Drew and his daughter and his niece Miss Barrymore and her brothers, and Miss Anglin and Miss Bates or Miss Adams or anybody like that. Don't you think so? Or what do you think? Could it be done, or has it been—or what about it?"

Miss Havender gasped. She saw new vistas of business opening before her.

"Yes, it has been done in a small way, and it was great fun, as you say; but it would have been more fun if it hadn't been so crude. What you would need would be a director who was not an amateur. Now, our director is

marvelous—Mr. Ferriday. He's the Belasco of the photoplays. He's as great as Griffith. He takes his art like a priest. If you had him you could do wonders."

"Then we must have him, by all means," said Charity, smiling a little at the gleam in Miss Havender's eyes. She had a feeling that Miss Havender had a deep, personal interest in Mr. Ferriday. Miss Havender had; most of the women in his environs had. In the first place, he was powerful and could increase or diminish or check salaries. He distributed places and patronage with a royal prerogative. But he was hungry for praise and suffered from the lack of social prestige granted "the new art."

Miss Havender seconded Charity's motion with enthusiasm. After a long conference it was agreed that Miss Havender should broach the matter to the great Mr. Ferriday while Charity recruited actors and authors.

As Charity rummaged in her hand-bag for a pencil to write Miss Havender's telephone number with, she turned out Kedzie Thropp's crumpled, shabby card. She started.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! The poor child! I had forgotten her completely. You might be able to do something for her. This Miss Adair is the prettiest thing, and I promised to get her a job. She might photograph splendidly. Won't you try to find her a place?"

"I'll guarantee her one," said Miss Havender, who was sure that the firm would be glad to put Mrs. Cheever under obligations. The firm was in need of patronage, as Mr. Ferriday's lavish expenditures had crippled its treasury, while his artistic whims had held up the delivery of nearly finished films.

Miss Havender told Charity to send the girl to her at the office any day and she would take care of her. Charity kept Kedzie's card in her hand, and, as soon as Miss Havender was gone, ran to her desk to write Kedzie. She told a pale lie—it seemed a gratuitous insult to confess that she had forgotten.

DEAR MISS ADAIR,—Please forgive my delay in keeping my promise, but I have been unable to find anything likely to interest you till to-day. But now Miss Grace Havender, of the Hyperfilm Company, has just assured me that if you will call on her at her office she will see that you are engaged. You will photograph so beautifully that I am sure you will have a great career. Please don't fail to call on Miss Havender.

Yours, with best wishes,

CHARITY C. CHEEVER.

She sent the letter to the address Kedzie had given her—which was that of Kedzie's abandoned boarding-house.

CHAPTER VI

SINCE Kedzie, by the time her marriage had reached its first morning-after, had already found her brand-new husband odious, there was small hope of her learning to like him or their poverty better on close acquaintance.

When he left her for his office she missed him, and her heart warmed toward him till he came home again. He always brought new disillusionment with him. He spent his hours out of office in bewailing his luck, celebrating the hardness of the times, and proclaiming the hopelessness of his prospects.

And then one evening he arrived with so doleful a countenance that Kedzie took pity on him. She perched herself on his lap and asked him what was worrying him.

"Nothing much, honey," he groaned, "except that I've lost my job."

Kedzie was thunderstruck. She breathed the expletive she learned from her latest companions. "My Gawd!"

Gilfoyle nodded dreadfully: "Business has been bad, anyway. Kalteyer, with his chewing-gum, was about our only big customer, and now he's gone bust. Yep. The bank's shut down on his loans, and he was caught with a mountain of bills on his hands. And the Breathasweeta Chewing Gum stopped selling. People didn't seem to take to the perfume idea."

"I just hate people!" Kedzie growled, pacing the floor.

Gilfoyle went on, bitterly: "Remember how they all said I was such a genius for thinking up the name 'Breath-asweeta,' and the perfumery idea? And how they liked my catch-phrase?"

Kedzie nodded.

Gilfoyle grew sarcastic: "Well, a man's a genius if he succeeds, and a fool if he doesn't. I'm just as sure as ever that there's a fortune in Breathasweeta. But when Kalteyer's bankers got cold feet I lost my halo. He and Kiam have been roasting the life out of me. They blame me! They've kept knocking me and quoting 'Kiss me again—who are you?' and then groaning. It's funny. I loved it when everybody else said it was great. But I didn't care much for it myself, the way they said it."

Kedzie flung herself on the tremulous wabbly-legged divan. Kedzie didn't like the phrase, either, now. When he had first smitten it from his brain she had thought it an inspiration and him a king. Now it sounded silly, coarse, a little indecent. Of course it had not succeeded. How could he ever have been so foolish as to utter it—"Kiss me again—who are you?" Why, it was vulgar!

Gilfoyle looked dismally incompetent as he drooped and mumbled. It is hard to tell an autobiography of failure and look one's best.

"Didn't you tell him you was—you were married?" queried Kedzie.

"I hadn't the courage."

"Courage! Well, I like that! So you're fired! Just like me. Funny! And here we are, married and all. My Gaw—"

"Here we are, married and all. They'll let me finish the week, but my goose is cooked, I guess. Jobs are mighty scarce in my line of business. Everybody's poor except the munitions crowd. I wish I knew how to make dynamite."

Kedzie pushed her wet hair back from her brow and tore her waist open a little deeper at the throat. This was carrying the joke of marriage a little too far even for her patient soul.

Soon Gilfoyle's office was closed to him and he was at home almost all day. That finished him with Kedzie.

He had not improved on connubial acquaintance. He was lazy and sloven of mornings, and since he had no office to go to he grew more neglectful of his appearance than ever. His end-to-end cigarettes got on Kedzie's nerves and cost a nagging amount of money, especially as she could not learn to like them herself.

He tried to write poetry for the magazines and permanently destroyed what little respect Kedzie had for the art. Hunting for some little love-word that was unimportant when found threw him into frenzies of rage. He went about mumbling gibberish.

"What in hell rhymes with *heaven?*" he would snarl. "*Beven, ceven, Devon, fevon, gevin, given*—" And so on to "*zeven.*" Then "*breven, creven, dreven*" and "*bleven, cleven, dleven*" and "*pseven, spleven, threven*" and so forth.

At length he would hurl his pen across the room, pull at his hair, and light another cigarette. Cigarette always rhymed with cigarette.

After a day or two of this drivel he produced a brief lyric with a certain fleetness of movement; it had small freight to carry. He took it to a number of editors he knew, and one of them accepted it as a kindness.

Kedzie was delighted till she heard that it would bring into the exchequer about seven dollars when the check came, which would be in two weeks.

When Gilfoyle was not fighting at composition he was calling the editors hard names and deploring the small remuneration given to poets by a pork-packing nation. Or he would be hooting ridicule at the successful poets and growing almost as furious against the persons addicted to the fashionable *vers libre* as he was against the wealthy classes.

It seemed to Kedzie that nothing on earth was less important than prosody, and that however badly poets were paid, they were paid more than they earned. She grew so lonely for some one to talk to that she decided to call on old Mrs. Jambers at the boarding-house. She

planned to stop in at dinner-time, in the hope of being asked to sit in at a real meal. The task of cooking what she could afford to buy robbed her of all appetite, and she was living mainly on fumes of food and gas.

She was growing thinner and shabbier of soul, and she knew it. She put off the call till she could endure her solitude no longer; then she visited Mrs. Jambers. A new maid met her at the door and barred her entrance suspiciously. Mrs. Jambers was out. So was Mrs. Bottger. So were the old boarders that Kedzie knew. New boarders had their rooms. Kedzie was exiled indeed.

She turned away, saying: "Tell Mrs. Jambers that Anita Adair stopped to say hello. I was just passing."

"Anita Adair?" said the maid. "You was Anita Adair, yes? Wait once. It is a letter for you by downstairs."

She closed the door in Kedzie's face. Some time later she came back and gave Anita the letter from Charity. It was several days old. She read it with amazement. The impulse to tear it up as she had torn up Charity's card in Newport did not last long. She went at once to a drug-store and looked up the telephone number and the address of the Hyperfilm Company. She repaid the druggist with a smile and a word of thanks; then she took a street-car to the office.

Miss Havender, who was also a scenario-writer and editor, was very busy. She had an executive manner that strangely contradicted her abilities to suffer under the pangs of love and unrequited idolatry. But then, business men are no more immune to the foolish venom on Cupid's arrows than poets—perhaps less, since they have no outlet of rhapsody. That was one of the troubles with Kedzie's poet. By the time Gilfoyle had finished a poem of love he was so exhausted that any other emotion was welcome, best of all a good quarrel and the healthful exercise of his poetic gifts for hate. He could hate at the drop of a hat.

When the office-boy brought Charity's letter of introduction to Miss Havender with the verbal message that Miss Adair was waiting outside Miss Havender nodded. She decided to procure this Miss Adair a good job in order to curry favor with Mrs. Cheever. She would advise Mr. Ferriday to pay her marked attention, too.

But when she caught sight of Kedzie running the gantlet of the battery of authors and typists, and noted how pretty she was, Miss Havender decided that it would not be good for Mr. Ferriday to pay marked attention to this minx. He had a habit of falling in love with women more ardently than with scenarios. He was a despot with a scenario, and he could quickly make a famous novel unrecognizable by its own father or mother. But a pretty woman could rule him ludicrously while her charm lasted.

Miss Havender would gladly have turned Kedzie from the door, but she did not dare. She had promised Mrs. Cheever to give the girl a job. But she had not promised what kind of job it should be.

She received Kedzie with such brusqueness that the frightened girl almost fell off the small rim of chair she dared to occupy. She offered Kedzie a post as a typist, but Kedzie could not type; as a film-cutter's assistant, but Kedzie had never seen a film; as a printing-machine engineer or a bookkeeper's clerk, but Kedzie had no ability to do things. She could merely look things.

Finally Miss Havender said: "I'm awfully sorry, Miss Adair, but the only position open is a place as extra woman. There is a big ballroom scene to be staged tomorrow, and a low dance-hall the next day, and on Monday a crowd of starving Belgian peasants. We could use you in those, but of course you wouldn't care to accept the pay."

She said this hopefully. Kedzie answered, hopelessly:

"What's the pay?"

"Three dollars."

"I'll take it."

Miss Havender accepted the inevitable, gave her the address of the studio—far up-town in the Bronx—and told her to report at eight the next morning.

Kedzie went back to her home in a new mood. She was the breadwinner now, if not a cake-earner. Gilfoyle was depressed by her good news, and she was indignant because he was not happy. The poor fellow was simply ashamed of his own inability to support her in the style she had been accustomed to dreaming about.

Kedzie was sullen at having to get the dinner that night. The hot water would not help to give her hands the ball-room texture. The next morning she had to leave early. Gilfoyle was too tired of doing nothing to get up, and she resolved to buy her breakfast ready-made outside. Her last glance at her husband with his frowsy hair on his frowsy pillow infuriated her.

The experience at the big studio assuaged her wrath against life. It was something new, and there was a thrill in the concerted action of the crowds. She wore a rented ball-gown which did not fit her. Seeing how her very shoulders winced at their exposure, one would not have believed that she was a graduate of the Silsby school of near to nature in next to nothing.

She danced with an extra man, Mr. Clarence Yoder, a portly actor out of work. He was a costume-play gentleman, and Kedzie thought him something grand. He found her an entrancing armload. He was rather aggressive and held her somewhat straitly to his exuberant form, but he gave her so much information that she did not snub him. She did not even tell him that she was married. Indeed, when at the close of a busy day he hinted at a willingness to take her out to see a picture that evening, she made other excuses than those that actually prevented her accepting. She spent a doleful evening at home with her dour husband and resented him more than ever.

On the second day Kedzie was a slum waif and did

not like it. She pouted with a sincerity that was irresistible.

Mr. Ferriday did not direct the crowd scenes in these pictures. His assistant, Mr. Garfinkel, was the slave-driver. Mr. Yoder cleverly called him "Simon Legree." Kedzie did not know who Mr. Legree was, but she laughed because Mr. Yoder looked as if he wanted her to laugh, and she had decided that he was worth cultivating.

During the course of the day, however, Mr. Garfinkel fell afoul of Mr. Yoder because of the way he danced with Kedzie. It was a rough dance prettily entitled "Walking the Dog." Mr. Yoder, who did a minuet in satin breeches to his own satisfaction, pleased neither himself nor Mr. Garfinkel in the more modern expression of the dancer's art.

Mr. Garfinkel called him a number of names which Mr. Yoder would never have tolerated if he had not needed the money. He quivered with humiliation and struggled to conform, but he could not please the sneering overseer. He sought the last resort of those persecuted by critics:

"Maybe you can do better yourself!"

"Well, I hope I choke if I can't," Garfinkel said as he passed the manuscript to the camera-man and summoned Kedzie to his embrace. "Here, Miss What's-your-name, git to me."

Kedzie slipped into his clutch, and he took her as if she were a sheaf of wheat. His arms loved her lithe elasticities. He dragged her through the steps with a wondering increase of interest. "Well, say!" he muttered for her private consumption, "you're a little bit of all right. I'm not so worse myself when I have such help."

He danced with her longer than was necessary for the demonstration. Then he reluctantly turned her over to Mr. Yoder. Kedzie did not like Mr. Yoder any more. She found him fat and clumsy, and his hands were fat and clammy.

Mr. Garfinkel had to show him again.

Kedzie could not help murmuring up toward his chin, "I wish I could dance with you instead of him."

Garfinkel muttered down into her topknot: "You can, girlie, but not before the camera. There's a reason. How about a little roof garden this evening, huh?"

Kedzie sighed, "I'm sorry—I can't."

Garfinkel realized that the crowd was sitting up and taking notice, and so he flung Kedzie back to Yoder and proceeded with the picture. He was angry at himself and at Kedzie, but Kedzie was angered at her husband, who was keeping her from every opportunity of advancement. Even as he loafed at home he prevented her ambitions. "The dog in the manger!" she called him.

Garfinkel paid her no further attention except to take a close-up of her standing at a soppy table and drinking a glass of stale beer with a look of desperate pathos. She was supposed to be a slum waif who had never had a mother's care. Kedzie had had too much of the same.

The next day was a Saturday. Kedzie did not work. She was lonely for toil, and she abhorred the flat and the neighbors. The expressive parrot was growing tautological. Kedzie went out shopping to be rid of Gilfoyle's nerves. He was in travail of another love-jingle, and his tantrums were odious. He kept repeating *love* and *dove* and *above*, and *tender*, *slender*, *offend her*, *defender*, and *kiss* and *bliss* till the very words grew gibberish, detestable nonsense.

Kedzie wandered the shops in a famine of desire for some of the new styles. Her pretty body cried out for appropriate adornment as its birthright. She was ashamed to go to the studio a third time in the same old suit. She ordered one little slip of a dress sent home "collect." She had hoarded the remnant of her Silsby dollars. When she reached home the delivery-wagon was at the curb and the man was up-stairs. Gilfoyle greeted Kedzie with resentment.

"What's this thing? I've got no money to pay it. You know that."

"Oh, I know that well," said Kedzie, and she went to the kitchen, where she surreptitiously extracted the money from the depths of the coffee-canister.

She paid for the dress and put it on. But she would not let Gilfoyle see her in it. She did not mind buying his cigarettes half so much as she minded paying for her own clothes. It outraged the very foundation principles of matrimony to have to pay for her own clothes.

Sunday was an appallingly long day to get through. She was so frantic for diversion that she would have gone to church if she had had anything fashionable enough to worship in. In the afternoon she went out alone and sat on a bench in upper Riverside Drive. A number of passers-by tried to flirt with her, but it was rather her bitterness against men than any scruple that kept her eyes lowered.

She would have been excited enough if she had known that the pictures in which she played a small part were being run off in the projection-room at the studio for Mr. Ferriday's benefit.

Everybody was afraid of him. The heads of the firm were hoping that he would approve the reels and not order them thrown out. They were convinced that they would have to break with him before he broke them. Mr. Garfinkel was hoping for a word of approval from the artistic tyrant.

But Ferriday was fretful and sarcastic about everything. Suddenly Miss Havender noted that he was interested, noted it by the negative proof of his sudden repose and silence. She could tell that he was leaning forward, taut with interest. She saw that Anita Adair was floating across the screen in the arms of Mr. Yoder.

There followed various scenes in which Kedzie did not appear, close-up pictures of other people. Ferriday fell back growling. Then he came bolt upright as the purring spinning-wheel of the projection machine poured out more of Kedzie.

Suddenly he shouted through the dark: "Stop! Wait!

Go back! Give us the last twenty feet again. Who is that girl—that dream? Who is she, Garfinkel?"

"I don't know her name, sir."

"Don't know her name! You wouldn't! Well, the whole world will know her name before I get through with her. Who is she, anyway?"

Miss Havender spoke. "Her name is Adair—Anita Adair."

"Anita Adair, eh? Well, where did she come from? Who dug her up?"

"I did," said Miss Havender.

"Good for you, old girl! She's just what I need." And now he studied again the scene in which Kedzie took down the draught of bitter beer, and there was a superhuman vividness in the close-up, with its magnified details in which every tiny muscle revealed its soul.

"Look at her!" Ferriday cried. "She's perfect. The pathos of her! She wants training, like the devil, but, Lord, what material!"

He was as fanatic as a Michelangelo finding in a quarry a neglected block of marble and seeing through its hard edges the mellow contours of an ideal. He was as impatient to assail his task and beat off the encumbering weight.

CHAPTER VII

KEDZIE wore her new frock when she reached the studio on Monday morning. She greeted Mr. Garfinkel with an entreating smile, and was alarmed by the remoteness of his response. He was cold because she was not for him. He led her respectfully to the anteroom of the sacred inclosure where Ferriday was behaving like a lion in a cage, belching his wrath at his keepers, ordering the fund-finders to find more funds for his great picture. It threatened to bankrupt them before it was finished, but he derided them as imbeciles, money-changers, misers.

Garfinkel was manifestly afraid of Ferriday's very echo, and he cowered a little when Ferriday burst through the door with mane bristling and fangs bared.

"Well, well, well!" Ferriday stormed. "What do you want, Garfinkel? What do you want, Garfinkel? What do you want?"

"You told me to bring Miss Adair to you as soon as she arrived, and—"

The lion roared as gentle as a sucking dove.

"And this is Miss Adair, is it? Of course it is. Welcome to our little boiler-factory, my dear. Come in and sit down. Garfinkel, get her a chair and then get out. Sit down, child. I never bite pretty girls."

Kedzie was pleasantly terrified, and she wondered what would befall her next. She gave the retreating Garfinkel no further thought. She sat and trembled before the devouring gaze of the great Ferriday. He studied her professionally, but he was intensely, extravagantly

human. That was why he appealed to the public so potently. He took their feelings and set them on fire and juggled with them flaming.

He had such caloric that he kindled actors and actresses to unsuspected brilliances. He made tinder of the dry-as-dusts, and he brought the warm-hearted to a white-hot glow.

He dealt with primary emotions crudely but vigorously. A soldier saluting an officer became in a Ferriday picture a zealot rendering a national homage. A maid watching her lover walk away angry became a Juliet letting Romeo go; a child weeping over a broken doll was an epitome of all regret. A mother putting a light in the window for an erring daughter's guidance was something new, an allegory as great as Bartholdi's Liberty putting her lamp in the window of the nation.

He was as intense with humor as with sorrow. A girl washing dishes brought shrieks of laughter at the little things she did—the struggle with the slippery soap, the recoil from the hot plate, the carelessness with the towel.

Ferriday had not talked to Kedzie two minutes before she was wringing her hands with excitement. He was discovering her to herself. He told her the story of a picture he wanted to put her in. He had withheld it for months, looking for the right interpreter. He resolved to postpone the completion of the big picture till he had finished a five-reel idyl for the apotheosis of Kedzie.

"The backers of the enterprise will have apoplexy when they hear of it," he laughed. "But what do I care?"

The whole army of the studio stood meanwhile at ease, drawing salary and waiting for Ferriday to remember his day's program and give the order to go ahead. But he was busy with his new story, in the throes of nympholepsy, seeing visions, hearing voices.

Kedzie sat in a marble expectancy, Galatea watching Pygmalion create her and prepare to bring her to life. She had never lived. She realized that. All her previous

existence had been but blind gropings in the womb of time.

The backers came to remind Ferriday that there was waiting a costly mob of actors, wooed from the speaking drama by trebled salaries. Ferriday howled to them to get out. They did not respect his inspirations; they suspected his motives toward Kedzie.

But Ferriday was deep in love with his art; he was panting with the afflation of Apollo. Old motives, old scenes, old characters that had served as "sure-fire stuff" since the earliest Hindu drama now fell into their ancient places and he thought them new. Kedzie was sure she had never heard such original ideas. Her gratitude to Ferriday was absolute. And he was clever enough, or crazy enough, to say that he was grateful to her. He had been looking for just Her, and she had come to him just in time. He made her promises that Solomon could not have made to Sheba, or Shakespeare to the dark lady.

Solomon could offer to his visitor Ophirian wealth, and Shakespeare could guarantee with some show of success (up to date) that his words of praise would outlive all other monuments. But Ferriday did not offer Kedzie minerals or adjectives. He cried:

"Little girl, I'll put you on a girdle of films that will encircle the world. Your smile will run round the globe like the sun, and light up dark places in Africa. Your tears will shower the earth. People in thousands of towns will watch your least gesture with anxiety. Queens will have you brought to their palaces to make them laugh and cry. The soldiers of the world will call you their mascot and write love-letters to you from the trenches. I will have a billion pictures made of you, and you shall breathe and move in all of them. You shall live a million lives at once. I will have your other self placed in museums so that centuries from now they can take you out and bring you to life again."

It was a mighty good speech. It would be hard to find

a serenade to beat it. And he read it superbly. He had sung it to every one of his only girls in the world, his eternal (pro tem.) passions. He had had about nineteen muses already.

Kedzie did not know this, of course. And it would not have mattered much. Better the nine-and-ninetieth muse to such a man than the first and final gas-stove slave of a Tommie Gilfoyle.

Kedzie sat in the state of nerves of a little girl alone on a mountain-top with lightning shimmering and striking all round her. She was so happy, so full of electrical sparks, that she was fairly incandescent. As she said afterward, she felt "all lit up."

Ferriday spun out the plot of his new five-reel scenario until he was like an unreeled spider. He was all out. The mechanical details interested and refreshed him now. He must order the studio scenery and select the outdoor "locations." He must pick the supporting cast and devise one or two blood-curdling moments of great peril.

Kedzie was too excited to note the ghoulish joy with which he planned to put her into the most perilous plights that had ever threatened even a movie star with death or crippledom.

"Do they scare you, my dear?" he asked.

"Scare me?" said Kedzie. "Why, Mr. Ferriday, if you told me to, I'd go out to the Bronx Zoo-ological Gardens and bite the ear off the biggest lion they got in the lion-house."

Ferriday reached out, put his arm about her farther shoulder, and squeezed her to him after the manner of closing an accordeon. Kedzie emitted the same kind of squeak. But she was not unhappy, and she did not even say, "Sir!"

The plot of The Kedziad was to be based on the From-Rags-to-Riches *leitmotiv*. Kedzie was to be a cruelly treated waif brought up as a boy by a demoniac Italian padrone who made her steal. She was to be sent into a

rich man's home to rob it. She would find the rich man about to commit suicide all over his sumptuous library. She would save him, and he would save her from the padrone's revenge, on condition that she should dress as a girl (he had not, of course, suspected that she really was one at the time—had always been one, in fact). She would dress as a girl and conduct a very delicate diplomatic mission with a foreign ambassador, involving a submarine wrecked (in the studio tank) and a terrific ride across one of the deadliest battle-fields of Verdun (New Jersey) with a vast army of three hundred supers.

When Kedzie had saved two or three nations and kept the United States from war the millionaire would regret that she was, after all, only a boy and be overcome with rapture when she told him the truth. The three hundred supers would then serve as wedding-guests in the biggest church wedding ever pulled off.

Kedzie liked this last touch immensely. It would make up for that disgusting guestless ceremony in the Municipal Building.

Ferriday got rid of her exquisitely by writing a note and saying to her:

"Now you run down and hop into my car and take this note to Lady Powell-Carewe—don't fail to call her 'Pole Cary.' She is to design your wealthy wardrobe, and I want her to study you and do something unheard of in novelty and beauty. Tell her that the more she spends the better I'll like it."

Kedzie was really a heroine. She did not swoon even at that.

When Ferriday dismissed her he enfolded her to his beautiful waistcoat, and then held her off by her two arms and said:

"Little girl, you've made me so happy! So happy! Ah! We'll do great things together! This is a red-letter day for the movie art."

Kedzie never feared that it might have a scarlet-letter

significance. She forgot that she was anything but a newborn, full-fledged angel without a past—only a future with the sky for its limit. Alas! we always have our pasts. Even the unborn babe has already centuries of a past.

It was Ferriday who brought Kedzie home to hers.

"What about dinner to-night, my dear? I feel like having a wonderful dinner to-night! Are partridge in season now? What is your favorite sherry? Let me call for you at, say, seven. Where shall I call?"

Kedzie flopped back from the empyrean to her flat. Gilfoyle again blockaded her.

She nearly swooned then. Her soul rummaged frantically through a brain like her own work-basket. She finally dug up an excuse.

"I'd rather meet you at the restaurant."

Ferriday smiled. He understood. The poor thing was ashamed of her boarding-house.

"Well, Cinderella, let me send my pumpkin for you, at least. I won't come. Where shall my chauffeur find you?"

Kedzie whimpered the shabby number of the shabby street.

"Shall he ask for Miss Adair, or—"

Kedzie was inspired: "I live in Mrs. Gilfoyle's flat-partment."

"I see," said Ferriday. "Miss Anita Adair—ring Mrs. Gilfoyle's bell. All right, my angel, at seven. Run along."

He kissed her, and she was ice-cold. But then women were often like that before Ferriday's genius.

CHAPTER VIII

THE things we are ashamed of are an acid test of our souls. Kedzie Thropp was constantly improving the quality of her disgusts.

A few months ago she was hardly ashamed of sleeping under a park bench. And already here she was sliding through the street in a limousine. It was a shabby limousine, but she was not yet ready to be ashamed of any limousine. She was proud to have it lent to her, proud to know anybody who owned such a thing.

What she was ashamed of now was the home it must take her to and the jobless husband waiting for her there. She was ashamed of herself for tying up with a husband so soon. She had married in haste and repented in haste. And there was a lot of leisure for more repentance.

Already her husband was such a handicap that she had refrained from mentioning his existence to the great moving-picture director who had opened a new world of glory to her—thrown on a screen, as it were, a cinemation of her future, where triumphs followed one another with moving-picture rapidity. He had made a scenario of her and invited her to dinner.

She smiled a little at the inspiration that had saved her from confessing that she was Mrs. Gilfoyle. It was neat of her to tell Mr. Ferriday that she could be addressed "in care of Mrs. Gilfoyle." In care of herself! That was just what she was. Who else was so interested in Kedzie's advancement as Kedzie?

She was a bitterly disappointed Kedzie just now. Ferriday had told her to go to Lady Powell-Carewe and

get herself a bevy of specially designed gowns at the expense of the firm. There was hardly a woman alive who would not have rejoiced at such a mission. To Kedzie, who had never had a gown made by anything higher than a sewing-woman, the privilege was heavenly. Also, she had never met a Lady with a capital L.

The dual strain might have been the death of her, but she was saved by the absence of Lady Powell-Carewe. Kedzie went back to the street, sick with deferred hope. Ferriday's chauffeur was waiting to take her home. She felt grateful for the thoughtfulness of Ferriday and crept in.

The nearer Kedzie came to her lowly highly flat the less she wanted even the chauffeur of Mr. Ferriday's limousine to see her enter it. He would come for her again at night, but the building did not look so bad at night.

So she tapped on the glass and told him to let her out, please, at the drug-store, as she had some marketing to do.

"Sure, Miss," said the chauffeur.

Kedzie liked that "Miss." It was ever so much prettier than "Mizzuz." She bought some postage-stamps at the drug-store and some pork chops at the butcher's and went down the street and up the stairs to her life-partner, dog on him!

Gilfoyle was just finishing a poem, and he was the least attractive thing in the world to her, next to his poem. He was in his sock feet; his suspenders were down—he would wear the hateful things! his collar was off, his sleeves up; his detachable cuffs were detached and stuck on the mantelpiece; his hair was crazy, and he had ink smears on his nose.

"Don't speak to me!" he said, frantically, as he thumped the table with finger after finger to verify the meter.

"No danger!" said Kedzie, and went into the bedroom to look over her scant wardrobe and choose the least of its evils to wear.

She shook her head at her poverty and went to the kitchen to cook lunch for her man. He followed her and read her his poem while she slammed the oven door of the gas-stove at the exquisitely wrong moments. She broke his heart by her indifference and he tore up the poem, carefully saving the pieces.

"A whole day's work and five dollars gone!" he groaned. He was so sulky that he forgot to ask her why she had come home so early. He assumed that she had been turned off. She taxed her ingenuity to devise some way of getting to the dinner with Ferriday without letting Gilfoyle know of it. At last she made so bold as to tell her husband that she thought she would drop in at her old boarding-house and stay for dinner if she got asked.

"I'm sick of my cooking," she said.

"So am I, darling. Go by all means!" said Gilfoyle, who owed her one for the poem.

Kedzie was suspicious of his willingness to let her go, but already she had outgrown jealousy of him. As a matter of fact, he had been invited to join a few cronies at dinner in a grimy Italian boarding-house. They gave it a little interest by calling it a "speak-easy," because the proprietor sold liquor without a license. Gilfoyle's cronies did not know of his marriage and he was sure that Kedzie would not fit. She did not even know the names of the successful, therefore mercenary, writers and illustrators, much less the names of the unsuccessful, therefore artistic and sincere.

To Kedzie's delight, Gilfoyle took himself off at the end of a perfect day of misery. He left her alone with her ambitions. She was in very grand company. She hated the duds she had to wear, but she solaced herself with planning what she should buy when money was rolling in.

When Ferriday's car came for her she was standing in the doorway. She hopped in like the Cinderella that Ferriday had called her. When the car rolled up to the

Knickerbocker Hotel she pretended that it was her own motor.

Ferriday was standing at the curb, humbly bareheaded. He wore a dinner-jacket and a soft hat which he tucked under his arm so that he might clasp her hands in both of his with a costume-play fervor. He had been an actor once—and he boasted that he had been a very bad one.

Kedzie felt as if he were helping her from a sedan chair. She imagined her knee skirts lengthened to a brocaded train, and his trousers gathered up into knee breeches with silver buckles.

Bitterness came back to her as she entered the hotel and her slimpsy little cloth gown must brush the Parisian skirts of the richly clad other women.

She pouted in right earnest and it was infinitely becoming to her. Ferriday was not thinking of the price or cut of her frock. He was perceiving the flexile figure that informed it, the virginal shoulders that curved up out of it, the slender, limber throat that aspired from them and the flower-poise of her head on its white stalk.

"You are perfect," he groaned into her ear, with a flattering agony of appreciation.

That made everything all right and she did not tremble much even before the *maître d'hôtel.* She was a trifle alarmed at the covey of waiters who hastened to their table to pull out the chairs and push them in and fetch the water and bread and butter and silver and plates. She was glad to have long gloves to take off slowly while she recovered herself and took in the gorgeous room full of gorgeous people. Gloves are most useful coming off and going on.

Kedzie was afraid of the bill of fare with its complex French terms, but Ferriday took command of the menu.

When he was working Ferriday could wolf a sandwich with the greed of a busy artist and give orders with a shred of meat in one hand and a mug of coffee in the other. But when he luxuriated he luxuriated.

To-night he was tired of life and dejected from a battle with the stingy backers, who had warned him for the last time once more that he had to economize. He needed to forget such people and the loathsome enemy of fancy, economy.

"I want to order something as exquisite as you are," he said. "Of course, there could be nothing as exquisite as you are, Miss Adair—unless you were curled up on a silver dish with a little apple in your mouth like a young roast pig. Ever read Lamb on pig?"

Kedzie laughed with glancing tintinnabulations as if one tapped a row of glasses with a knife.

Ferriday sighed. He saw that she had never heard of Lamb and thought he was perpetrating an ancient pun. But he did not like bookish women and he often said that nothing was more becoming to a woman than ignorance. They should have wisdom, but no learning.

Ferriday was one of those terrifying persons who know, or pretend to know, curious secrets about restaurants and their resources. Wine-cellars and the individualities of chefs had no terror for him so far as she could see. He expressed contempt for apparent commonplaces that Kedzie had never heard of. He used French words with an accent that Kedzie supposed to be perfect.

The waiters knew that he did not know much and had merely picked up a smattering of dining-room lore, but they humored his affectations. And of all affectations, what is more futile than the printing of American bills of fare in French?

"Would you prefer the Astrakhan caviar?" he began on Kedzie, "or some or-durv? The caviar here is fairly trustworthy."

Kedzie shrugged her perfectly accented shoulders in a cowardly evasion, and he ordered the first caviar Kedzie had ever eaten. It looked as if it came from a munitions-factory, but she liked it immensely, especially as a side-

long glance at the bill of fare told her that it cost one dollar and twenty-five cents per person.

Next he proposed either a potage madrilène or a crême de volaille, Marie Louise.

Kedzie chose the latter because it was the latter. She mumbled:

"I think a little cremmy vly Marie Louisa would be nice."

She was amazed to find later how much it tasted like chicken soup.

"We don't want any fish, do we?" Ferriday moaned. "Or do we? They don't really understand the suprême de sole à la Verdi here, so suppose we skip to the roast, unless you would risk the aigulette de pompano, Coquelin. The last time I had a tronçon de saumon here I had to send it back."

Kedzie said, "Let's skip."

She shuddered. The word reminded her, as always, of Skip Magruder. She remembered how he had hung over the table that far-away morning and recommended ham 'n'eggs. His dirty shirt-sleeves and his grin came back to her now. The gruesome Banquo reminded her so vividly of her early guilt of plebeiancy that she shivered. The alert Ferriday noticed it and called:

"Have that window closed at once. There's an infernal draught here."

Kedzie was thrilled at his autocratic manner. He scared off the ghost of Magruder.

Ferriday pondered aloud the bill of fare as if it were the plot of a new feature film.

"Capon en casserole, milk-fed guinea-hen escoffier, plover en cocotte, English golden pheasant, partridge—do any of those tiresome things interest you?"

It was like asking her whether she would have a Gorham tea-set, a Balcom gown, or a Packard landaulet. She wanted them all.

But her eyes caught the prices. Four dollars for an

English pheasant! No wonder they called it golden. It seemed a shame, though, to stick such a nice man, after he had already ordered two dollars and a half's worth of caviar.

She chose the cheapest thing. She was already falling in love with Ferriday.

The plover was only a dollar. She was not quite sure what kind of animal it would turn out to be. She had a womanly intuition that it was a fowl of some breed. She wanted to know. She had come to the stomach school.

"I think I'll take a bit of the plover," she said.

"Nice girl!" thought Ferriday, who recognized her vicarious economy.

"Plover it is," he said to the waiter, and added, "tell Pierre it's for me and he'd better not burn it again."

The waiter was crushed by Pierre's lapse, especially as the chef's name was Achille.

Ferriday went on: "With the plover we might have some champignons frais sous cloche and a salade de laitue avec French dressing, yes? Then a substantial sweet: a coupe aux marrons or a nesselrode pudding, yes?"

Kedzie wanted to ask for a plain, familiar vanilla ice-cream, but she knew better. She ordered the nesselrode—and got her ice-cream, after all. There were chestnuts in it, too—so she was glad she had not selected the coupe aux marrons.

Ferriday did not take a sweet, but had a cheese instead, after an anxious debate with the waiter about the health of the Camembert and the decadence of the Roquefort. When this weighty matter was settled he returned to Kedzie:

"Now for something to drink. A little sherry and bitters to begin with, of course; and a—oh, umm, let me see—simple things are best; suppose we stick to champagne." He called it "shah pine," according to Kedzie's ear, but she hoped he meant shampane. She had always wanted to taste "wealthy water," as Gilfoyle called it, but never called for it.

Kedzie was a trifle alarmed when Ferriday said: "I hope you don't like it sweet. It can't be too dry for me."

"Me, either," Kedzie assured him—and made a face implying that she always took it in the form of a powder.

Ferriday smiled benignly and said to the waiter: "You might bring us een boo-tay de Bollinger Numéro—er—katter—vang—kanz." He knew that the French for ninety-five was four-twenties-fifteen, but the waiter could not understand till he placed his finger on the number with his best French accent. He saved himself from collapse by a stern post-dictum:

"Remember, it's the vintage of nineteen hundred. If you bring that loathsome eighteen ninety-three I'll have to crack the bottle over your head. You wouldn't want that, would you?"

"*Non, m'zoo, oui, monzoo,*" said the German waiter.

"Then we'll have some black coffee and a liqueur—a Curaçao, say, or a green Chartreuse, or a white mint. Which?"

Naturally Kedzie said the white mint, please.

With that Ferriday released the waiter, who hurried away, hoping that Ferriday's affectations included extravagant tips.

Kedzie gobbled prettily the food before her. Ferriday could tell that she was anxiously watching and copying his methods of attack. He soon knew that this was her first real meal *de luxe*, but he did not mind that. Columbus was not angry at America because it had never seen an explorer before.

It delighted Ferriday to think that he had discovered Kedzie. He would say later that he invented her. And she wanted tremendously to be discovered or invented or anything else, by anybody who could find a gold-mine in her somewhere and pay her a royalty on her own mineral wealth.

When her lips met the shell-edge of the champagne-glass and the essence of all mischief flung its spray against

the tip of her cleverly whittled nose she winced at first. But she went boldly back, and soon the sprites that rained upward in her glass were sending tiny balloons of hope through her brain. They soared past her small skull and her braided hair and the crown of her hat and on up through the ceiling, and none of them broke—as yet.

Her soul was pleasantly a-simmer now and she could not tell whether the wine made her exultant or she the wine. But she was sure that she had at last discovered her life.

And with it all she was dreadfully canny. She was only a little village girl unused to city ways, and the handsome city stranger was plying her with wine; but she was none of your stencil figures that blot romance.

Kedzie was thinking over the cold, hard precepts that women acquire somehow. She was resolving that since she was to be as great as he said she should be, she must not cheapen herself now.

Many of these little village girls have come to town since time was and brought with them the level heads of icily wise women who make love a business and not a folly. Many men are keeping sober mainly nowadays because it is good business; many women pure for the same reason

Turkish sultans as fierce as Suleiman the Magnificent have bought country girls kidnapped by slave-merchants and have bought tyrants in the bargain. Ferriday the Magnificent was playing with holocaust when he set a match to Kedzie.

But now she was an attractive little flame and he watched her soul flicker and gave it fuel. He also gave it a cigarette; at least he proffered her his silver case, but she shook her head.

"Why not?" he asked. "All the women, old and young, are smoking here."

She tightened her plump lips and answered, "I don't like 'em; and they give me the fidgets."

"You'll do!" he cried, softly, reaching out and clench-

ing her knuckles in his palm a moment. "You're the wise one! I felt sure that pretty little face of yours was only a mask for the ugliest and most valuable thing a woman can possess."

"What's that?" said Kedzie, hoping he was not going to begin big talk.

"Wisdom," said Ferriday. "A woman ought to be as wise as the serpent, but she ought to have the eyes of a dove. Your baby sweetness is worth a fortune on the screen if you have brains enough to manage it, and I fancy you have. Here's to you, Miss Anita Adair!"

He drank deep, but she only touched the brim. She saw that he was drinking too much—he had had several cocktails while he waited for her to arrive. Kedzie felt that one of the two must keep a clear head. She found that ice-water was a good antidote for champagne.

When Ferriday sharply ordered the waiter to look to her glass she shook her head. When he finished the bottle and the waiter put it mouth down in the ice as an eloquent reminder Ferriday accepted the challenge and ordered another bottle. He was just thickened of tongue enough to say "boddle."

Kedzie spoke, quickly: "Please, no. I must go home. It's later than I thought, and—"

"And Mrs. Gilfoyle will wonder," Ferriday laughed. "That's right, my dear. You've got to keep good hours if you are going to succeethe on the screen. Early to bed, for you must early-to-rise. *Garçon, garçon, l'addition, s'il vous* please."

While he was paying the bill Kedzie was thinking fleetly of her next problem. He would want to take her home in his car, and it would be just her luck to find her husband on the door-step. In any case, she was afraid that Ferriday would be sentimental and she did not want Ferriday to be sentimental just yet. And she would not tolerate a sentiment inspired or influenced by wine. Love from a bottle is the poorest of compliments.

Already she was a little disappointed in Ferriday. He was a great man, but he had his fault, and she had found him out. If he were going to be of use to her she must snub that vinous phase at once.

The cool air outside seemed to gratify Ferriday and he took off his hat while the carriage-starter whistled up his car. Now Kedzie said:

"Please, Mr. Ferriday, just put me in a taxicab."

"Nonsense! I'll take you home. I'll certainly take you home."

"No, please; it's 'way out of your way, and I—I'd rather—really I would."

Ferriday stared hard at her as if she were just a trifle blurred. He frowned; then he smiled.

"Why, bless your soul, if you'd rather I wouldn't oppose you, I wouldn't—not for worlds. But you sha'n't go home in any old cabby taxishab; you'll take my wagon and I'll walk. The walk will do me good."

Kedzie thought it would, too, so she consented with appropriate reluctance. He lifted her in and closed the door—then leaned in to laugh:

"Give my love to old Mrs. Gilfoyle. And don't fail to be at the shudio bright and early. We'll have to make sun while the hay shines, you know. Good night, Miss Adair!"

"Good night, Mr. Ferriday, and thank you ever so much for the perfectly lovely evening."

"It has been l-l-lovely. Goo-ood night!"

The car swept away and made a big turn. She saw Ferriday marching grandiosely along the street, with his head bared to the cool moonlight. She settled back and snuggled into the cushions, imagining the car her very own.

She left her glory behind her as she climbed the long stairs, briskly preparing her lies and her defensive temper for her husband's wrathful greeting.

He was not there.

CHAPTER IX

KEDZIE had no sooner rejoiced in the fortunate absence of her husband than she began to worry because he was away. Where was he and with whom? She sat by the window and looked up and down the street, but she could find none among the pedestrians who looked like her possessor. She forgot him in the beauty of the town—all black velvet and diamonds.

Once more she sat with her window open toward her Jerusalem and worshiped the holy city of her desire. That night at the Biltmore she was an ignorant country-town girl who had never had anything. Now she had had a good deal, including a husband. But, strangely, there was just as much to long for as before—more, indeed, for she knew more things to want.

As the scientist finds in every new discovery a new dark continent, in each atom a universe, so Kedzie found from each acquired desire infinite new desires radiating fanwise to the horizon and beyond.

At first she had wanted to know the town—now she wanted to be known by the town. Then her father stood in her way; now, her husband. She had eloped from her parents with ease and they had never found her again. She had succeeded in being lost.

She did not want to be lost any more; but she was lost, utterly nobody to anybody that mattered. Now was her chance, but she could not run away from her husband and get famous without his finding her. If he found her he would spoil her fun and her fame. She did not know how many public favorites are married, how many

matinée idols are managed by their wives. She had never heard of the prima donna's husband.

She fell asleep among her worries. She was awakened by the noisy entrance of her spouse. He was hardly recognizable. She thought at first that her eyes were bleary with sleep, but it was his face that was bleary. He was what a Flagg caricature of him would be, with the same merciless truth in the grotesque.

Kedzie had never seen him boozy before. She groaned, expressively, "My Gawd! you're pie-eyed."

He sang an old song, "The girl guessed right the very first time, very firstime, verfirstime."

He tried to take her into his arms. She slapped his hands away. He laughed and flopped into a chair, giggling. She studied him with almost more interest than repugnance. He was idiotically jovial, as sly as an idiot and as inscrutable.

Without waiting to be asked he began a recital of his chronicles. He was as evidently concealing certain things as boasting of others. Kedzie rather hoped he had done something to conceal, since that would be an atonement for her own subtleties.

"I have been in Bohemia," he said, "zhenuine old Bohemia where hearts are true and eyes are blue and ev'body loves ev'body else. Down there a handclasp is a pledzh of loyalty. There's no hypocrisy in Bohemia—not a dambit. No, sirree. The idle rish with their shnobberies and worship of mere-mere someshing or oth' have no place in Bohemia, for in Bohemia hearsh are true and wine is blue and—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Kedzie.

"Thass way you're always repressin' me. You're a hopeless Philisterine. But I have no intentions of shuttin' up, my darlin' Anita—Anita— Shh! shh!"

He was hushing himself. He was very patently remembering something and conspicuously warning himself not to divulge it. Kedzie loathed him too much to care.

Now that he was safely housed he ceased to interest her. She went to bed. He spiraled into a chair to meditate his wickedness. He felt that he was as near to being a hypocrite as was possible in Bohemia.

He had met two talented ladies at the dinner, one was a sculptress from Mr. Samuel Merwin's Washington Square and the other was a paintress from Mr. Owen Johnson's Lincoln Square. Neither lady had had any work accepted by the Academy or bought by a dealer. Both were consequently as fierce against intrenched art as Gilfoyle was against intrenched capital and literature.

They were there in the company of two writers. One of these could not get anything published at all except in the toy magazines, which paid little and late and died early. The other writer could get published, but not sold. Both were young and needed only to pound their irons on the anvil to get them hot, but they blamed the world for being cold to true art. In time they would make the sparks fly and would be in their turn assailed as mere blacksmiths by the next line of younger apprentices. They were at present in the same stage as any other new business—they were building up custom in a neighborhood of strangers.

But at present they were suppressed, all four, men and women; suppressed and smothered as next June's flowers and weeds are held back by the conspiracy of December's snows and the harsh criticisms of March.

The sculptress's first name was Marguerite and Gilfoyle longed to call her by it, after his second goblet of claret-and-water. He had a passion for first names. He had the quick enthusiasm of a lawyer or an advertising-man for a new client. Before he quite realized the enormity of his perfidy he was pretending to compose a poem to Marguerite. He wrote busily on an old bill of fare which had already been persecuted by an artist or two. And he wrote his Anita poem over again in Marguerite's honor, *mutatis mutandis*.

Pretty maid, pretty maid, may I say Marguerita?
Your last name is sweet, but your first name is sweeter.

And so on to the bitter end.

He slipped the lyric to Marguerite and she read it with squeals of delight, while Gilfoyle looked as modest as such a genius could. The other girl had to read it, of course, while Gilfoyle tried to look unconscious. He was as successful as one is who tries to hold a casual expression for a photograph.

The other girl's reward was a shrug and the diluted claret of a "Very nice!" Gilfoyle said, "You're no judge or else you're jealous." The two men read it, and said, "Mush!" and "Slushgusher!" but Marguerite's eyes belonged to Gilfoyle the rest of the evening, also her hands now and then.

Remembering this, Gilfoyle was uneasy. One ought to be careful to keep an aseptic memory at home. Yet if this was not infidelity, what would be? In a rich man Gilfoyle would have called it a typical result of the evil influence of wealth. In the absence of wealth it was a gay little Pierrot-perfidy of the *vie de Bohême*. Still, poets have to be like that. An actor must make love to whatever leading lady confronts him, and so must poets, the lawyers and press agents of love.

But when he got home Gilfoyle repented as he remembered. He suffered on a rack of guilty bliss, but he managed to hold back the secret which was bubbling up in him with a bromo-seltzer effervescence. Incidentally his "pretty maid, pretty maid, Marguerite" had kept back the fact that she had a husband in the hardware business in Terre Haute. What the husband was keeping back is none of this history's business.

It was all as old and unoriginal as original sin. The important thing to Kedzie was the fact that shortly after the poem had been revamped a stranger had joined, first in song with Gilfoyle's table-load and then in conversation.

He had ended by introducing his companion and bringing her over. Had it not been for the fine democracy of Bohemia they would have cut the creature dead. She was a buyer, one of Miss Ferber's Emma McChesneys on a lark.

Gilfoyle did not tell Kedzie any of this. He told what followed as he toiled at the fearfully complicated problem of his shoe-laces, a problem rendered almost insuperable by the fact that he could not hold his foot high very long and dared not hold his head low at all.

"Wonnerful thing happent t'night, Anita. Just shows you never know where your lucksh goin' to hit you. I'm down there with—er—er—couple of old frensh, you know, and who comes over to our table but big feller from out Wesh—Chicago—Chicago— Gobbless Ch'cag! His name is entitled Deshler. In coursh conv'sation I mention Breathasweeta Shewing Gum—see?—he says he knew that gum and he'd sheen the advershments, bes' ol' advershments ever sheen, thass what Mr. Beshler said and I'm not lyin' to you, Anita. No, sir.

"Whereupon—whereupon I modes'ly remark, 'Of course they're clever—nashurally they're clever, because they were written by I'i'l Mr. ME!' He says, 'You really wrote 'em?' and I say, 'I roally wretem!' And Mr. Keshler says, 'Well, I'll be g'dam'.' Then he says, 'Who coined that name Breathasweeta?' And I says, 'I did!' and he says, 'Well, I'll be g'dam'!'

"Anyway, to make long shory stort, Mr. Nestor he says, 'What you doin' now? Writen copy for the Kaiser or the K-zar?' and I says, 'I am a gen'leman of leisure,' and he says, 'There's a good job waitin' fer lad your size out in Ch'cag! Would you come 'way out there?' and I says, 'I fear nothing!'

"So Mr. Zeisselberg wrote his name on a card, and if I haven't los' card, or he doesn't change his old mind, I am now Mr. John J. Job of Chicago. And now I got a unsolishited posish—imposishible solishion—solution—un-

polusion solishible—you know what I mean. So kiss me!"

Kedzie escaped the kiss, but she asked, with a sleepy eagerness, "Did you tell him you were married?"

"Nashur'ly not, my dear. It was stric'ly business conv'sation. I didn' ask him how many shildren he had and he didn' ask me if I was a Benedictine or a—or a pony of brandy—thass pretty good. Hope I can rememmer it to-mor'."

Kedzie smiled, but not at his boozy pun. She seemed more comfortable. She fell asleep. Next to being innocent, being absolved is the most soothing of sensations.

CHAPTER X

THE next morning that parrot, still unmurdered, woke Kedzie early. She buried one ear deep in the pillow and covered the other with her hair and her hand. The parrot's voice receded to a distance, but a still smaller voice began to call to her. She was squirming deeper for a long snooze when her foot struck another.

Her husband!—King Log, audibly a-slumber. She pouted drowsily, frowned, slid away, and tried to commit temporary suicide by drowning herself in sleep.

Then her stupor faded as the tiny call resounded again in her soul. She was no longer merely Mrs. Anita Gilfoyle, the flat-dwelling nobody. She was now Anita Adair, the screen-queen. She was needed at the studio.

She sat up, looked at her husband, her unacknowledged and unacknowledging husband. A mysterious voice drew her from his side as cogently as the hand of Yahweh drew the rib that became a woman from under the elbow of Adam.

She rose and looked back and down at the man whom the law had united her with indissolubly. Eve must have wondered back at Adam with the same sense of escape while he lay asleep. According to one of the conflicting legends of the two gods of Genesis, woman was then actually one with man. Marriage has ever since been an effort to put her back among his ribs, but she has always refused to be intercostal. It is an ancient habit to pretend that she is, and sometimes she pretends to snuggle into place. Yet she has never been, can never be, re-ribbed—especially not since marriage is an attempt to

fit her into the anatomy of an Adam who is always, in a sense, a stranger to her.

Kedzie gazed on her Adam with a sense of departure, of farewell. She felt a trifle sorry for Gilfoyle, and the moment she resolved to quit him he became a little more attractive.

There was something pitiful about his helpless sprawl: his very awkwardness endeared him infinitesimally. She nearly felt that tenderness which good wives and fond mothers feel for the gawky creatures they hallow with their devotion.

Kedzie leaned forward to kiss the poor wretch good-by, but, unfortunately (or fortunately), a restlessness seized him, he rolled over on his other side, and one limp, floppy hand struck Kedzie on the nose.

She sprang back with a gasp of pain and hurried away, feeling abused and exiled.

At the studio she was received by Garfinkel with distinction. Ferriday came out to meet her with a shining morning face and led her to the office of the two backers.

A contract was waiting for her and the pen and ink were handy. Kedzie had never seen a contract before and she was as afraid of this one as if it were her death warrant. It was her life warrant, rather. She tried to read it as if she had signed dozens of contracts, but she fooled nobody. She could not make head or tail of "the party of the first part" and the terms exacted of movie actors. She understood nothing but the salary. One hundred dollars a week! That bloomed like a rose in the crabbed text. She would have signed almost anything for that.

The deed was finally done. Her hundred-odd pounds of flesh belonged to the Hyperfilm Company. The partners gave her their short, warm hands. Ferriday wrung her palm with his long, lean fingers. Then he caught her by the elbow and whisked her into his studio. He began to describe her first scene in the big production. The backers had insisted that she prove her ability as a

minor character in a play featuring another woman. Kedzie did not mind, especially when Ferriday winked and whispered: "We'll make you make her look like something the cat brought in. First of all, those gowns of yours—"

She had told him of her ill luck the day before in finding Lady Powell-Carewe out. He sent her flying down again in his limousine. She stepped into it now with assurance. It was beginning to be her very own. At least she was beginning to own the owner.

She felt less excitement about the ride now that it was not her first. She noticed that the upholstery was frayed in spots. Other cars passed hers. The chauffeur was not so smart as some of the drivers. And he was alone. On a few of the swagger limousines there were two men in livery on the box. She felt rather ashamed of having only one.

Her haughty discontent fell from her when she arrived at Lady Powell-Carewe's shop. She wished she had not come alone. She did not know how to behave. And what in Heaven's name did you call her—"Your Ladyship" or "Your Majesty" or what?

She walked in so meekly and was so simply clad that nobody in the place paid any heed to her at first. It was a very busy place, with girls rushing to and fro or sauntering limberly up and down in tremendously handsome gowns.

Kedzie could not pick out Lady Powell-Carewe. One of the promenaders was so tall and so haughty that Kedzie thought she must be at least a "Lady." She was in a silvery, shimmery green-and-gray gown, and the man whom the customers called "Mr. Charles" said:

"Madame calls this the Blown Poplar. Isn't it bully?"

Kedzie caught Mr. Charles's eye. He spoke to her sharply:

"Well?"

He evidently thought her somebody looking for a job as bundle-carrier. She was pretty, but there were tons of pretty girls. They bored Mr. Charles to death. He had a whole beagle-pack of them to care for.

Kedzie poked at him Ferriday's letter of introduction addressed to Lady Powell-Carewe. Mr. Charles took it and, not knowing what it contained, bore it into the other room without asking Kedzie to sit down.

He reappeared at the door and bowed to her with great amazement. She slipped into a chaotic room where there were heaps of fabrics thrown about like rubbish, long streamers of samples littering a desk full of papers.

A sumptuous creature of stately manner bowed creakily to Kedzie, and Kedzie said, trying to remember the pronunciation:

"Lady Pole-Carrier?"

A little plainly dressed woman replied: "Yes, my child. So you're the Adair thing that Ferriday is gone half-witted over. He's just been talking my ear off about you. Sit down. Stop where you are. Let me see you. Turn around. I see." She turned to the stately dame. "Rather nice, isn't she, Mrs. Congdon? H'mm!" She beckoned Kedzie to come close. "What are your eyes like?" She lorgnetted the terrified girl, as if she were a throat-specialist. "Take off that horrid hat. Let me see your hair. H'mm! Rather nice hair, isn't it, Mrs. Congdon?—that is, if she knew how to do it. Let me see. Yes, I get your color, but it will be a job to suit you and that infernal movie-camera. It kills my colors so! I have to keep remembering that crimson photographs black and cream is dirty, and blue and yellow are just nothing."

Mr. Charles came in to say that Mrs. Noxon was outside. Kedzie recognized the great name with terror. Lady Powell-Carewe snapped:

"Tell the old camel I'm ill. I can't see ner to-day. I'm ill to everybody to-day. I've taken a big job on."

This was sublime. To have aristocrats turned away for her!

While Madame prowled among the fabrics and bit her lorgnon in study, Kedzie looked over the big albums filled with photographs of the creations of the great creatrix. For Lady Powell-Carewe was a creative artist, taking her ideas where she found them in art or nature, and in revivals and in inventions. She took her color schemes from paintings, old and new, from jewels, landscapes. It was said that she went to Niagara to study the floods of color that tumble over its brink.

She began to interest herself in Kedzie, to wish to accomplish more than the mere selling of dress goods made up. She decided to create Kedzie as well as her clothes.

"Do you wear that pout all the time?" she asked.

"Do I pout?" Kedzie asked, in an amazement.

"Don't pretend that you don't know it and do it intentionally. Also why do you Americans always answer a question by asking another?"

"Do we?" said Kedzie.

Lady Powell-Carewe decided that Kedzie was as short on brains as she was long on looks. But it was the looks that Lady Powell-Carewe was going to dress, and not the brains.

She ordered Kedzie to spend a lot of money having her hair cared for expertly.

She tried various styles on Kedzie, ordering her to throw off her frock and stand in her combination while Mrs. Congdon and Mr. Charles brought up armloads of silks and velvets and draped them on Kedzie as if she were a clothes-horse.

The feel of the crisp and whispering taffetas, the elevation of the brocades, the warm nothingness of the chiffons like wisps of fog, the rich dignity of the cloths, gave Kedzie rapture on rapture. Standing there with a burden of fabrics upon her and Lady Powell-Carewe kneeling at her feet pinning them up and tucking them

here and there, Kedzie was reminded of those ancient days of six months gone when her mother used to kneel about her and fit on her the home-made school-dress cut according to Butterick patterns. Now Kedzie had a genuine Lady at her feet. It was a triumph indeed. It was not hard now to believe that she would have all the world at her feet one day.

Lady Powell-Carewe used Kedzie's frame as a mere standard to fly banners from. Leaving the head and shoulders to stand out like the wax bust of a wistful doll, she started a cloud of fabric about her in the most extravagant fashion. She reined it in sharply at the waist, but again it flared to such distances on all sides that Kedzie could never have sailed through any door but that of a garage without compression.

On this vast bell of silk she hung streamers of rosettes, flowers of colors that would have been strident if they had been the eighteenth of a shade stronger. As it was, they were as delicious as cream curdled in a syrup of cherries. The whole effect would have been burlesque if it had not been the whim of a brilliant taste. Men would look it at and say, "Good Lord!" Women would murmur, enviously, "Oh, Lord!" Kedzie's soul expanded to the ultimate fringe of the farthest furbelow.

When the fantasy was assured Lady Powell-Carewe had Kedzie extracted from it. Then pondering her sapling slenderness, once more she caught from the air an inspiration. She would incase Kedzie in a sheath of soft, white kid marked with delicate lines and set off with black gloves and a hat of green leaves. And this she would call "The White Birch."

And that was all the creating she felt up to for the day. She had Kedzie's measure taken in order to have a slip made as a model for use in the hours when Kedzie should be too busy to stand for fitting.

It was well for Kedzie that there was a free ride waiting for her. Her journey to the studio was harrowed by the

financial problem which has often tortured people in limousines. She did not like to ask Mr. Ferriday for money in advance. He might think she was poor. There is nothing that bankrupts the poor so much as the effort to look unconcerned while they wait for their next penny.

Kedzie was frantic with worry and was reduced to prayer. "O Lord, send me some money somehow." The number of such prayers going up to heaven must cause some embarrassment, since money can usually be given to one person only by taking it from another—and that other is doubtless praying for more at the very moment.

To Kedzie's dismay, when she arrived at the studio and asked for Mr. Ferriday, Mr. Garfinkel appeared. He was very deferential, but he was, after all, only a Garfinkel and she needed a Ferriday. He explained that his chief was very busy and had instructed Garfinkel to teach Miss Adair the science of make-up for the camera, to take test pictures of her, and give her valuable hints in lens behavior.

Late in the afternoon Ferriday came in to see the result of the first lesson. He said, "Much obliged, Garfinkel," and Garfinkel remembered pressing duty elsewhere.

His departure left Kedzie alone with Ferriday in a cavern pitch black save for the cone of light spreading from the little hole in the wall at the back to the screen where the spray of light-dust became living pictures of Kedzie.

Kedzie did not know that the operator behind the wall could peek and peer while his picture-wheel rolled out the cataract of photographs. Ferriday was careful of her—or of himself. He held her hand, of course, and murmured to her how stunning she was, but he made no effort to make love, to her great comfort and regret.

At length he invited her to ride home in his limousine, but he did not invite her to dinner. She told herself that she would have had to decline. But she would have liked to be asked.

While he rhapsodized once more about her future she was thinking of her immediate penury. As she approached the street of her residence she realized that she must either starve till pay-day or borrow. It was a bad beginning, but better than a hopeless ending. After several gasps of hesitation she finally made her plea:

"I'm awfully sorry to have to trouble you, Mr. Ferriday, but I'm— Well, could you lend me twenty-five dollars?"

"My dear child, take fifty," he cried.

She shook her head, but it hurt her to see the roll of bills he dived for and brought up, and the careless grace with which he peeled two leaves from the cabbage. Easy money is always attended with resentment that more did not come along. Kedzie pouted at her folly in not accepting the fifty. If she had said, "Lend me fifty," he would have offered her a hundred. But the twenty-five was salvation, and it would buy her food enough to keep her and her useless husband alive, and to buy her a pair of shoes and some gloves.

As the car drew near her corner she cried that she had some shopping to do and escaped again at the drug-store.

She found her husband at home. There was an unwonted authority about his greeting:

"Well, young woman, you may approach and kiss my hand. I am a gentleman with a job. I am a Chicago gentleman with a job."

"You don't mean it!" Kedzie gasped; and kissed him from habit with more respect than her recent habit had shown.

"I mean it," said Gilfoyle. "I am now on the staff of the Deshler Advertising Agency. I was afraid when Mr. D. offered me an unsolicited position (he could say it to-day) that it was the red wine and not the real money that was talking, but he was painfully sober this noon, took me out to lunch, and told me that he would be proud to avail himself of my services."

"Splendid!" said Kedzie, with sincere enthusiasm. It

is always pleasant to learn that money is setting toward the family.

But something told Kedzie that her late acquisition of twenty-five dollars would not be with her long. Easy come, easy go. "How much is the fare to Chicago?" she asked, in a hollow voice.

"Twenty-two dollars is the fare," said Gilfoyle, "with about eight dollars extra. I couldn't borrow a cent. I've got only five dollars."

"I thought so," said Kedzie.

"Thought what so?" said Gilfoyle.

"Nothing," said Kedzie. "Well, I happen to have twenty-five dollars."

"That's funny," said Gilfoyle. "Where did you get it?"

"Oh, I saved it up."

"From what?"

"Well, do you want the twenty-five, or don't you?"

Gilfoyle pondered. If he questioned the source of the money he might find it out, and be unable to accept it. He wanted the money more than the hazardous information; so he said:

"Of course I want the twenty-five, darling, but I hate to rob you. Of course I'll send for you as soon as I can make a nest out there, but how will you get along?"

"Oh, I'll get along," said Kedzie; "there'll be some movie-money coming to me Saturday."

"Well, that's fine," Gilfoyle said, feeling a weight of horrible guilt mingled with superior wings of relief. He hesitated, hemmed, hawed, perspired, and finally looked to that old source of so many escapes, his watch. "There's a train at eight-two; I could just about make it if I scoot now."

"You'd better scoot," said Kedzie. And she gave him the money.

"I'd like to have dinner with you," Gilfoyle faltered, "but—"

"Yes, I'd like to have you, but—"

They looked at each other wretchedly. Their love was so lukewarm already that they bothered each other. There was no impulse to the delicious bitter-sweet of a passionate farewell. She was as eager to have him gone as he to go, and each blamed the other for that.

"I'll write you every day," he said, "and I'll send the fare to you as soon as I can get it."

"Yes, of course," Kedzie mumbled. "Well, good-by —don't miss your train, darling."

"Good-by, honey."

They had to embrace. Their arms went out about each other and clasped behind each other's backs. Then some impulse moved them to a fierce clench of desperate sorrow. They were embracing their dead loves, the corpses that lay dead in these alienated bodies. It was an embrace across a grave, and they felt the thud of clods upon their love.

They gasped with the pity of it, and Kedzie's eyes were reeking with tears and Gilfoyle's lips were shivering when they wrenched out of that lock of torment.

He caught her back to him and kissed her salt-sweet mouth. Her kiss was brackish on his lips as life was. She felt a kind of assault in the fervor of his kiss, but she did not resist. He was a stranger who sprang at her from the dark, but he was also very like a poet she had loved poetically long, long ago.

Then they wrung hands and called good-bys and he caught up his suit-case and rushed through the door.

She hung from the window to wave to him as he ran down the street to the Subway, pausing now and again to wave to her vaguely, then stumbling on his course.

At last she could not see him, whether for the tears or for the distance, and she bowed her head on her lonely sill and wept.

She had a splendid cry that flushed her heart clean as a new whistle. She washed her eyes with fine cold water and half sobbed, half laughed, "Well, that's over."

CHAPTER XI

CHARITY COE CHEEVER was making less progress with her amateur movie-show than Kedzie with her professional cinematic career.

Charity telephoned to ask Jim Dyckman to act, but he proved to be camera-shy and intractable.

She had difficulties with all her cast. It was impossible to satisfy the people who were willing to act with the rôles they were willing to assume.

Charity was lunching at the Ritz-Carlton with Mrs. Noxon when she saw Jim Dyckman come in with his mother. Mrs. Noxon left Charity and went over to speak to Mrs. Dyckman. So Charity beckoned Jim over and urged him to accept the job of impresario.

He protested, but she pleaded for his help at least on an errand or two.

"Jim, I want you to go up to the studio of these people and find this great man Ferriday and get him to promise to direct for us. And by the way, that little girl you pulled out of the pool, you know—well, they promised to get her a job at the studio. You look her up and find out how she's doing—there's a darling."

He shook his head, resisting her for once, and answered:

"Go to the devil, Charity darling. You won't let me love you, so I'll be cussed if I'll let you get me to working for you. I've had you bad and I'm trying to get well of you. So let me alone."

That was how Peter Cheever, talking to the headwaiter at the head of the stairs, saw his wife and Jim Dyckman with their heads together at a table. He wanted to

go over and crack a water-bottle over Dyckman's head. He did not do it, for the excellent reason that Zada L'Etoile was at his side. She had insisted on his taking her there "to lunch with the bunch," as she expressed it.

She also saw Charity and Jim and Cheever's sudden flush of rage. She felt that the way was opening for her dreams to come true. She was so happy over the situation that she helped Cheever out of the appalling problem before him.

He did not know how to go forward or how to retreat. He could think of nothing to say to the headwaiter who offered him his choice of tables.

Zada caught his elbow and murmured in her very best voice just loud enough for the headwaiter's benefit:

"Mr. Cheever, I'm so sorry—but I'm feeling dizzy. I'm afraid I shall faint if I don't get out in the air. It's very close in here."

"It is very close, madam," said the headwaiter, and he helped to support her down the steps quietly and deferentially, just as if he believed it.

Zada and Cheever thought they were escaping from a crisis, but they were drifting deeper and deeper into the converging currents. When they were safe in the motor outside Zada was proud.

"Some get-away, that?" she laughed.

"Wonderful!" said Cheever. "I didn't know you had so much social skill."

"You don't know me," she said. "I'm learning! You'll be proud of me yet."

"I am now," he said. "You're the most beautiful thing in the world."

"Oh, that's old stuff," she said. "Any cow can be glossy. But I'm going in for the real thing, Peterkin. I've cut out the cocktails and I don't dance with anybody but you lately. Have you noticed that? It's the quiet life and the nice ways for me. Do you mind?"

"It's very becoming," he said. "Anything for a novelty."

Yet he liked her surprisingly well in this phase. She had been cutting down his liquor, too. She had been cutting down his extravagances. She had even achieved the height of denying herself luxuries—one of the surest and least-trodden short-cuts to a man's heart—a little secret path he hardly knows himself.

The affair of Zada and Cheever was going the normal course. It had lost the charm of the wild and wicked—through familiarity; and it was tending to domestication, as all such moods do if nothing interrupts them. There are all sorts of endings to such illicit relations: most of them end with the mutual treachery of two fickle creatures; some of them end with bitter grief for one or the other or both; some of them end in crime, or at least disgrace; and some of them finish, with disconcerting immorality, in an inexcusable respectability.

The improvement in Zada's mind and heart was, curiously, the most dangerous thing in the world for Cheever. If she had stayed noisy and promiscuous and bad, he would have tired of her. But she was growing soft and homey, gentle as ivy, and as hard to tear away or to want to tear away. After all, marriage is only the formalizing of an instinct that existed long before—exists in some animals and birds who mate without formality and stay mated without compulsion.

When Zada and Cheever had escaped from the Ritz-Carlton they took lunch at another restaurant. Zada was childishly proud of her tact and of Cheever's appreciation. But afterward, on the way "home"—as she called what other people called her "lair"—she grew suddenly and deeply solemn.

"So your wife is with Dyckman again," she said. "It looks to me like a sketch."

Cheever flushed. He hated her slang and he did not accept her conclusion, but this time he did not forbid her

to mention his wife. He could hardly do that when her tact had saved him and Charity from the results of their double indiscretion and the shame of amusing that roomful of gossips.

Zada misunderstood his silence for approval; so she spoke her thoughts aloud:

"If that He and She business goes on I suppose you'll have to divorce the lady."

"Divorce Charity!" Cheever gasped. "Are you dotty?"

That hit Zada pretty hard, but she bore it. She came back by another door.

"I guess I am—nearly as dotty as she is about Dyckman. First thing you know she'll be trying to get free herself. What if she asks you for a divorce?"

"I'd like to see her!"

"You mean you wouldn't give her her freedom?"

"Not in a thousand years."

He was astounded at the sepulchral woe of Zada's groan. "O Lord, and I thought—oh—you don't love me at all then! You never really loved me—really! God help me."

Cheever wondered what Zada would smash first. He hoped it would not be the window of the car. He hoped he could get her safely indoors before the smashing began.

He did. She was a grim and murky storm-cloud full of tornado when they crossed the pavement and the vestibule of the apartment-house and went up in the elevator.

But once inside the door, her breast began to heave, her nostrils to quiver, her fingers to work. Her maid came to take her hat, and paled to see her torment. Zada gave her her things and motioned her away. She motioned her four or five times. The maid had needed only one motion.

Cheever watched Zada out of the corner of his eye and wondered why he had ever been fated to fall in love with such a creature. He was convinced that he had been fate-forced into the intrigue. He had no sense whatever of

volition or wicked intent. He could only feel that he had tried to be decent and play fair and be generous.

The thought of what the neighbors were about to hear made him sick with chagrin. The fact that the neighbors were under suspicion themselves only aggravated the burden of shame.

The hardest part of Zada's agony was her pitiful effort to take her medicine like a lady. It was terrific how hard it was for one of a wildcat heritage and habit to keep the caterwaul back and the claws muffled. The self-duel nearly wrecked Zada, but she won it. She was not thoroughbred, but she had tried to be thoroughgoing. She was evidently not a success as a self-made lady. She kept whispering to herself:

"What's the use? Oh, why did I try? Oh, oh, oh, what a fool I've been! To think!—to think!—to think!"

Cheever was distraught. He had waited for the outbreak, and when it did not come he suffered from the recoil of his own tension.

"For the Lord's sake, yell!" he implored.

She turned on him eyes of extraordinary abjection. She saw at last where her lawlessness had brought her, and she despised herself. But she did not love him any the more for understanding him. She saw at last that one cannot be an honest woman without actually being—an honest woman. She was going to get honesty if it broke a bone.

She told her accomplice: "I want you to go away and stay away. Whatever you do, leave me be. There's nothing else you can do for me except to take back all the stuff you've bought me. Give it to that wife you love so much and wouldn't suspect no matter what she did. You love her so much that you wouldn't let her go even if she wanted to leave you. So go back to her and take these things to her with my comp'ments."

Now it was Cheever who wanted to scream as he had not screamed since he was the purple-faced boy who used

to kick the floor and his adoring nurse. But he had lost the safety valve of the scream. He smothered..

When Zada began to peel off her rings and thrust them out to him he swiftly turned on his heel and fled. He never knew whether Zada woke the block with her howls or not when he left her forever.

He forgot to ask when he came back.

CHAPTER XII

FIRST he went home to take his temper to Charity. On the way he worked up a splendid rage at her for giving such a woman as Zada grounds for gossip. He went straight to her room and walked in without knocking.

Charity was dictating a letter to her secretary. Cheever surprised a phrase before she saw him.

"'Thousands of blind soldiers and thousands of orphans hold out their hands to us. We must all do what we can—' Why, hello! Where did you drop from? Give me just a minute while I finish this letter. Let me see. Where was I?"

The secretary read in a dull, secretarial voice:

"'Thousblinsoldiersorphs—wem'sdo'll we can.'"

"Oh yes," said Charity. "'You have never failed to respond to such an appeal,' comma; no, semicolon; no, period. 'So I shall put you down for a subscription of' dash 'how much' question-mark. 'Thanking you in adv'—no, just say, 'My husband joins me in kindest regards to your dear wife and yourself, cordially yours'—and that will be all for the present."

The secretary garnered her sheaves and went out. Charity said to Cheever:

"Well, young man, sit down and tell us what's on your mind. But first let me tell you my troubles. There's a match on my dresser there. Peter, I'm in an awful mess with this movie stunt. I can get plenty of people to pose for the camera, but I can't find a man to manage the business end of it. I was lunching with Mrs. Noxon at the Ritz to-day. I called your friend Jim Dyckman over

from another table and begged him to take the job. But he refused flatly, the lazy brute. Don't you think you could take it on? I wish you would. It's such a big chance to make a pile of money for those poor soldiers."

Cheever was lost. Unconsciously she had cleared up the scandal of her talk with Dyckman. He remembered that he had seen Mrs. Noxon at another table, standing. He felt like a dog and he wanted to fawn at the heels he had prepared to bite. He felt unworthy to be the associate of his sainted wife in her good works. He said:

"You flatter me. I couldn't manage a thing like that. I'm busy. I—I couldn't."

"You've got to play a part, then," she said. "You're looking so well nowadays, taking such good care of yourself. Will you?"

"I might," he said. "I'll think it over."

She was called to the telephone then and he escaped to his own room. He moped about and sulked in his uncomfortable virtue. He dressed for dinner with unusual care. He was trying to make a hit with his wife.

In going through his pocket-book he came across two theater tickets. He had promised to take Zada. He felt like a low hound, both for planning to take her and for not taking her. She would have a dismal evening. And she was capable of such ferocious lonelinesses. He had driven away all her old friends. She would recall them now, he supposed. That would be a pity, for they were an odious gang. It would be his fault if she relapsed. It was his duty, in a way, to help her to reform.

The ludicrous sublimity of such an ethical snarl reduced him to inanity. He stayed to dinner. Charity had not expected him to stop. She had planned an evening's excavation into her correspondence and had not changed her street dress. She was surprised and childishly delighted to have him with her—then childishly unhappy as she observed:

"But you're all togged up. You're going out."

"No—well—that is—er—I was thinking you would like to see a show. I've got tickets."

"But it's late. I'm not dressed."

"What's the odds? You look all right. There's never anybody but muckers there Saturday nights. We'll miss it all if you stop to prink."

"All right," she cried, and hurried through the dinner.

He was glad at least that he had escaped a solemn evening at home. He could not keep awake at home.

So they went to the theater; but there was not "nobody there," as he had promised.

Zada was there—alone in a box, dressed in her best, and wearing her East-Lynniest look of pathos.

The coincidence was not occult. After several hours of brave battle with grief and a lonely dinner Zada had been faced by the appalling prospect of an evening alone.

She remembered Cheever's purchase of the theater tickets, and she was startled with an intuition that he would take his wife in her place. Men are capable of such indecent economies.

Zada was suffocated with rage at the possibility. She always believed implicitly in the worst things she could think of. If Peter Cheever dared do such a thing! And of course he would! Well, she would just find out!

She threw a lonely wineglass at the fern-dish and smashed a decanter. Then she pushed off the table about a hundred dollars' worth of chinaware, and kicked her chair over backward. She had been famous for her back-kick in her public dancing-days.

She howled to her maid and went into her wardrobe with both hands. She acted like a windmill in a dress-shop. Finally she came upon what she was looking for—the most ladylike theater-gown that ever combined magnificence with dazzling respectability.

She made up her face like a lady's—it took some paint to do that. Meanwhile, her maid was telephoning

speculators for a box. Zada arrived before Cheever and Charity did. She waited a long time, haughtily indifferent to the admiration she and her gown were achieving. At last she was punished and rewarded, revenged, and destroyed by the sight of Cheever coming down the aisle with Charity. They had to pause to let a fat couple rise, and they paused, facing Zada. Cheever caught her eye and halted, petrified, long enough for Charity to sit down, look up at him, follow the line of his gaze, and catch a full blast of Zada's beauty and of the fierce look she fastened on Cheever. Charity's eyes ran back on the almost visible clothes-line of that taut gaze and found Cheever wilting with several kinds of shame.

He sat down glum and scarlet, and Charity's heart began to throb. A second glance told her who Zada was. She had seen the woman often when Zada had danced in the theaters and the hotel ballrooms.

Charity found herself thinking that she was not Cheever's wife, but only a poor relation—by marriage. The worst of it was that she was not dressed for the theater. The gown she wore was exquisite in its place, but it was dull and informal and it gave her no help in the ordeal she was suddenly submitted to. Her hair had not been coiffed by the high-elbowed artist with the waving-tongs. Her brains were not marceled for a beauty-contest with her rival. She was at her worst and Zada was at her supreme.

Zada was not entirely unknown to Charity. She had not been able to escape all the gossip that linked Cheever with her, but she had naturally heard little of it, and then only from people of the sort who run to their friends with all the bad news they can collect. They are easily discredited.

Charity had spent so many bad hours wondering at her husband's indifference and had heard his name linked with so many names that she had temporized with the situation. Cheever was of the sort that looks at every

woman with desire, or looks as if he looked so. The wives of such men grow calloused or quit them.

Charity had not quit Cheever. She had hardly dreamed of it. She had not outgrown being hurt. Her slow wrath had not begun to manifest itself. This crushing humiliation smote her from a clear sky.

She was not ready for it. She did not know what to do. She only knew, by long training, that she must not do what she first wanted to do. She had been taught from childhood what Zada was only now trying to learn.

Charity pretended a great interest in her program and laughed flightily. Cheever was morose. He stole glances at Zada and saw that she was in anguish. He felt that he had treated her like dirt. He was unworthy of her, or of his wife, or of anything but a horsewhip.

He glanced at Charity and was fooled by her casual chatter. He supposed that she was as ignorant of the affair with Zada as he wanted her to be. He wished that he could pretend to be unconcerned, but he could not keep his program from shivering; his throat was full of phlegm; he choked on the simplest words. He thought for some trick of escape, a pretended illness, a remembered business engagement, a disgust with the play.

He was afraid to trust his voice to any proposal or even to go out between the acts.

The worst of it was that he felt sorrier for Zada than for his wife. Poor Zada had nothing, Charity had everything. How easily we vote other people everything! Cheever was afraid of the ride home with Charity; he dreaded to be at home to-night and to-morrow and always. He longed to go to Zada and help her and let her revile him and scratch him, perhaps, provided only that she would throw her arms about him afterward. He never imagined that a duel of self-control, a mortal combat in refinement, was being fought over him by those two women.

Zada's strength gave out long before Charity's; she was

newer to the game. During a dark scene she surrendered the field and decamped. But Cheever and his wife both caught the faint shimmer of her respectable robe as it floated from the rail and vanished in the curtains. It was like a dematerialization at a séance.

Cheever wanted to crane his neck and dared not. Charity felt a great withdrawal of support in the flight of her rival. She had not Zada's presence now to sustain her through the last act. But she sat it out.

She was bitter against Cheever, and her thoughts dark. The burden of his infidelity was heavy enough for her to bear, but for him to subject her to such a confrontation was outrageous. She had no doubt that it was a cooked-up scheme. That vile creature had planned it and that worm of a husband had consented to it!

The most unforgivable thing of all, of course, was the clothes of it.

Charity, in the course of time, forgave nearly everybody everything, but she never forgave her husband that.

On the way home she had nothing to say. Neither had Cheever. He felt homesick for Zada. Charity felt homeless. She must have been the laughing-stock or the pitying-stock of the whole world for a long time.

When they reached home she bade Cheever a perfectly cheerful good-night and left him to a cold supper the butler had laid out for him. She did not know that he stole from the house and flew to Zada.

Charity was tempted to an immediate denunciation of Cheever and a declaration of divorce. She would certainly not live with him another day. That would be to make herself an accomplice, a silent partner of Zada's. It would be intolerable, immoral, not nice.

CHAPTER XIII

THE next morning proved to be a Sunday and she felt a need of spiritual help in her hour of affliction. Man had betrayed her; religion would sustain her grim determination to end the unwholesome condition of her household. The Bible said (didn't it?), "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." That surely meant, "If thy husband offend thee, divorce him."

She went to church, her ancestral Episcopalian church, where her revered Doctor Mosely, the kindliest old gentleman in the world, had poured sermons down at her like ointment and sent prayers up like smoke since she was a little girl. But on this day he chose to preach a ferocious harangue against divorce as the chief peril, the ruination of modern society.

The cowering Charity got from him the impression that home life had always been flawless in this country until the last few years, when divorce began to prosper, and that domestic life in countries where there is little or no divorce had always been an unmitigated success. If only divorce and remarriage were ended, the millennium of our fathers would return.

This had not been her previous opinion; it was her vivid impression from Doctor Mosely, as honest an old darling as ever ran facts through a sieve and threw away all the big chunks that would not go through the fine mesh of his prejudices. He abhorred falsehood, cruelty, skepticism, sectarianism, and narrowness, and his sermons were unconscious mixtures of hand-picked truth and eloquent legends, ruthless denunciations of misunderstood people

and views, atheism toward the revelations of all the sciences (particularly the science of biblical criticism, which he hated worse than he hated Haeckel), and a narrowness that kept trying to sharpen itself into a razor edge.

Fortunately he belied in his life almost all of his pulpit crimes and moved about, a tender, chivalrous, lovable old gentleman. It was this phase that Charity knew, for she had not heard one of his sermons for a year or more, though she saw him often in his parish work. She was the more amenable to his pulpit logic to-day.

Charity had always assumed that the United States was the most virtuous, enlightened, and humane of nations. According to Doctor Mosely, it was shockingly corrupt, disgusting. The family as an institution was almost completely gone; its only salvation would be an immediate return to a divorceless condition. (Like that of Italy and Spain and France during the Middle Ages?)

Hitherto Charity had not thought much about divorce, except to regret that certain friends of hers had not hit it off better and had had to undergo cruel notoriety after their private distresses. But divorce was no longer an academic question to her. It had come home.

When she realized that her husband had been not only neglectful of her, but devoted to a definite other woman, she felt at first that it would be heinous to receive him back in her arms fresh from the arms of a vile creature like Zada L'Etoile. Now she got from the pulpit the distinct message that just this was her one important duty, and that any attempt to break from such a triple yoke would be a monstrous iniquity which the Church could not condone.

Doctor Mosely implied that when one partner to a marriage wandered aside into forbidden paths (as he very prettily phrased the very ugly matter) it was always the fault of the other partner. He thundered that the wives of to-day were not like their simple-minded mothers, be-

cause they played bridge and smoked cigarettes and did not attend prayer-meetings and would not have children. It was small wonder, he said, that their husbands could not be held. Doctor Mosely had preached the same sermon at Charity's mother and her generation, and his father had preached it at his generation, with the necessary terms changed and the spirit the same. He and his kind had been trying since time began to cure the inherent ills of human relationships by railing at old errors and calling them new.

So in the dark ages the good priests had tried to cure insane people by shouting denunciations at the devils that inhabited them. The less they cured the louder they shouted, and when the remedy failed they blamed the patients.

So fathers try to keep their little sons from being naughty and untruthful by telling them how good and obedient little boys were when they were little boys. They tell a silly lie to rebuke a lie and wonder at their non-success.

Marital unrest is no more a sign of wickedness than stomach-ache is; it is a result of indigestion or ptomaine poisoning, and divorce is only a strong purge or an emetic, equally distressing and often the only remedy.

But Doctor Mosely honestly abominated divorce; he regretted it almost as much as he regretted the Methodist Episcopal heresies or the perverseness of the low-Church doctrines.

Charity had always been religious; she had wrecked her health visiting the sick and cherishing the orphan and she had believed everything she was told to believe. But now when she went to church for strength and comfort she came away feeling herself a condemned and branded failure, blameworthy for all her husband's sins and sins of her own that she had not suspected.

She prayed to be forgiven for causing her husband to sin and asked strength to win him back to his duty. She

reached home in such a mood of holy devotion that when she found her husband there she bespoke him tenderly and put out her arms to him and moaned:

"Forgive me!"

"For what?" he said as he went to her from habit before he could check himself. But even as he clasped her she felt that his very sleeves were warm from Zada L'Etoile's embrace and she slipped through his arms to the floor.

When she came to, she was lying on a couch with a cushion under her heels, and Cheever was chafing her wrists and kissing her hand. She drew it away feebly and said:

"Thank you. I'll be all right. Just leave me alone."

He remembered that Zada had said much the same thing. He was glad to leave the room. When he had gone Charity got up and washed her hands, particularly the hand, particularly the spot, he had kissed.

She seemed to feel that some of the rouge from Zada's lips had been left there by Cheever's lips. There was a red stain there and she could not wash it away. Perhaps it was there because she tried so hard to rub it off. But it tormented her as she went sleep-walking, rubbing her hand like another Lady Macbeth.

CHAPTER XIV

ON Monday there was a meeting of one of the committees she had organized for the furtherance of what she called the movie stunt. The committee met at the Colony Club. Most of the committee were women of large wealth and of executive ability, and they accomplished a deal of business with expedition in their own way.

There was some chatter, but it was to the point. At length during a discussion of various forms of entertainment Mrs. Noxon said she was afraid that the show would be deadly dull with only amateurs in it. Mrs. Dyckman thought that professionals would make the amateurs look more amateurish than ever. The debate swayed from side to side, but finally inclined toward the belief that a few professional bits would refresh the audience.

And then suddenly Mrs. Neff had to sing out: "Oh, Charity, I've an idea. Let's get some stunning dancer to do a special number. I remember one who would be just the ticket. What's the name—Zada Le Something or other. She's a gorgeous creature. Have you seen her recently?"

Several women began signaling wildly to Mrs. Neff to keep quiet. Charity saw their semaphores at work, but Mrs. Neff was blind—blind, but not speechless. She kept on singing the praises of Zada till everybody wanted to gag her.

An open mind to gossip is an important thing. We ought to keep up with all the scandals concerning our

friends and enemies. Otherwise we lose many an opportunity to undercut the latter and we are constantly annoying the former.

It was Mrs. Neff, of all people—and she loved Charity Coe dearly—who caused her public shame and suffering. Mrs. Neff had defended Charity from the slanderous assumptions of Prissy Atterbury and had refused to listen to Pet Bettany's echoes.

She had, indeed, a bad reputation for rebuking well-meaning disseminators of spice. This attitude discouraged several persons who would otherwise have told her all sorts of interesting things about Charity's husband's *entente cordiale* with Zada.

Charity had dwelt in a fool's paradise of trust in Peter Cheever for a while, then had dropped back into a fool's purgatory of doubt, where she wandered bewildered. Now she was thrown into the fool's hell. She knew that her love had been betrayed. Everybody else knew it and was wondering how she would act.

Charity was sick. This was really more than she had bargained for. As before, she felt it immodest to expose her emotions in public, so she said:

"Yes, I've seen her. She is very attractive, isn't she? I don't know if she is dancing in public any more, but I'll find out."

Mrs. Neff sat back triumphantly and let the meeting proceed. But there was a gray pall on the occasion. Women began to look at their wrist-watches and pretend to be shocked at the lateness of the hour, and all of them shook hands solemnly with Charity. There was a poorly veiled condolence in their tone.

Charity carried it off pluckily, but she was in a dangerous humor. She really could not endure the patronizing mercy of these women.

That night Cheever made again his appearance at the dinner-table. He had some notion of putting Charity off her guard or of atoning to her in part for his resumed al-

liance with Zada. He could not have told what his own motives were, for he was in a state of bewilderment between his duties to Mrs. Charity Tweedledum and Miss Zada Tweedledee. He could not tell which one had the greater claim on his favors.

Charity studied him across the table and wondered what he really was, faun or traitor, Mormon or weakling. He was certainly handsome, but the influence of Zada L'Etoile seemed to hang about him like a green slime on a statue.

She could not find any small talk to carry the meal along. At length Cheever asked:

"What you been up to all day?"

"Oh, committee stuff—that movie thing, you know."

"How's it coming on? Got a manager yet?"

"Not yet. We were talking about getting some professionals in to brighten up the evening."

"Good work! Those amateurs make me sick."

"Mrs. Neff proposed that we get some stunning dancer to do a turn."

"Not a bad idea. For instance—"

He emptied his glass of Chablis and the butler was standing by to refill it when Charity answered:

"Mrs. Neff suggested a dancer I haven't seen on the stage for some time. You used to admire her."

"Yes?" said Cheever, pushing his glass along the table toward the butler, who began to pour as Charity slid home her *coup de grâce.*

"Zada L'Etoile. What's become of her?"

Cheever's eyes gaped and his jaws dropped. The butler's expression was the same. He poured the Chablis on the back of Cheever's hand and neither noticed it till Charity laughed hysterically and drove the sword a little deeper:

"Is she still alive? Have you seen her?"

Cheever glared at her, breathed hard, swore at the butler, wiped his hand on his napkin, gnawed his lips,

twisted his mustache, threw down the napkin, rose, and left the table.

Charity's smile turned to a grimace. She saw that the butler was ashamed of her. He almost told her that she ought to have known better than subject him and the other servants to such a scene.

Charity caught herself about to say, "I beg your pardon, Hammond."

She felt as if she ought to beg the pardon of everybody in the world.

She could not stand the lonely dining-room long. She rose and walked out. It seemed that she would never reach the door. It was a *via crucis* to her. Her back ached with the sense of eyes upon it.

The hall was lonely. The thud of the front door jarred her. She went into the library. It was a dark and frowning cavern. She went into the music-room, approached the piano, looked over the music, turned up "Go, Lovely Rose." The rose that Jim Dyckman said she was had been thrown into the mud. She went up to her room. The maid was arranging her bed for the night. She had turned down one corner of the cover, built up one heap of pillows, set one pair of slippers by the edge.

Charity felt like a rejected old spinster. She sat and mused and her thoughts were bitter. She remembered Doctor Mosely's sermon and wondered if he would preach what he preached if he knew what she knew. She would go to him and tell him.

But what did she know? Enough to convince herself, but nothing at all that even a preacher would call evidence.

She must have proof. She resolved to get it. There must be an abundance of it. She wondered how one went at the getting of evidence.

CHAPTER XV

WHILE Charity was resolving to tear down her life Kedzie Thropp was building herself a new one on the foundations that Charity had laid for her with a card of introduction to Miss Havender.

In the motion-picture world Kedzie had found herself. Her very limitations were to her advantage. She would have failed dismally in the spoken drama, but the flowing photograma was just to her measure.

The actor must not only know how to read his lines and express emotions, but must keep up the same spontaneity night after night, sometimes for a thousand performances or more. The movie actor is expected to respond to a situation once or twice for rehearsal, and once or twice for the camera. There is no audience to struggle against and listen for—and to. The director is always there at the side calling, reminding, pleading, encouraging, threatening, suggesting the thoughts, the lines, and the expression, doing all the work except the pantomime.

That was Kedzie's salvation. Tell her a story and make her the heroine of it, and her excitable heart would thrill to the emotional crisis. Take a snapshot of her, and the picture was caught.

Ferriday soon learned this and protected her from her own helpless vice of discontent. She lapsed always from her enthusiasm after it was once cold. As an actress she would have been one of those frequent flashers who give a splendid rehearsal or two and then sink back into a torpor. She might have risen to an appealing first-

night performance. Thereafter, she would have become dismal. The second week would have found the audiences disgusted and the third would have found her breaking her contract and running away with somebody. A horse that has run away once is likely to run away again. Kedzie had run away twice.

But the movie life was just the thing for her. She did not play always the same set scenes in the same scene sets. She was not required even to follow the logic of the story. For a while she would play a bit in a tiny angle representing a drawing-room. When that was taken she would play, not the next moment of the story, but the next scene in that scene. It might be a year further along in the story. It was exciting.

Her second picture had great success. She played the girl brought up as a boy by a cruel Italian padrone who made her steal. Her third picture was as nearly the same as possible.

Now she was a ragged waif, a girl, who dressed as a boy and sold newspapers so as to keep her old father in liquor. The garret was a rickety table, a rusty stove, a broken chair, and a V of painted canvas walls with a broken window and a paper snowstorm falling back of it. There Kedzie was found in very becoming ragged breeches, pouting with starvation. Her father drove her out for gin.

She walked out of the set, picked up a bottle, and brought it back. The scene in the saloon would be taken later: also the street scenes to and from.

An officer of the "Cruelty" came and took her from the garret. That was the beginning of a series of adventures culminating in a marriage with a multimillionaire. While the garret was set, the finish of the story was taken.

She ran and changed her costume to one of wealth with ermine. She came in with the handsome young millionaire. It was the next winter. Her father was dying. He asked her forgiveness and gave her his blessing.

Then Kedzie changed back to her first costume and went in the motor to a dismal street where she was shown coming out of the tenement, and going back to it gin-laden, and again with the officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

She changed once more to her wealthy garb with the ermine and was photographed going in with her young millionaire.

The next day the scene in the Cruelty office was built and she acted in it. The drawing-room in the millionaire's home was assembled and she acted in that. Then she went out in rags and sold newspapers on a corner. So it went. The chronology hopelessly jumbled, but the change incessant.

The studio was a palace of industry. Many of the scenes were played on the great glass-covered roof. On bright days she would ride in a closed automobile to some street or some lonely glen or to the home of some wealthy person who had lent his house to the movies on the bribe of a gift to his favorite benevolence.

There was the thrill of sitting in the projection-room and watching herself scamper across the scene, or flirt or weep, look pretty or gorgeous, sad or gay.

One's own portrait is always a terribly fascinating thing, for it is always the inaccurate portrait of a stranger curiously akin to one and curiously alien. But to see one's portrait move and breathe and feel is magic unbelievable.

In the enlarged close-ups when Kedzie was a girl giantess, the effect was uncanny. She loved herself and was glad of the friendly dark that hid her own wild pride in her beauty, but did not prevent her from hearing the exclamations of Ferriday and the backers and the other actors who were admitted to the preliminary views.

There was a quality in her work that surpassed Ferriday's expectations and made her pantomime singularly legible. The modulations of her thought from one extreme mood to another were always traceable. This was

true of the least feelings. Ferriday would say: "Now you decide to telephone your lover. You hesitate, you telephone, a girl answers, you wait, he speaks, you smile."

Kedzie would nod with impatient zest and one could read each gradation of thought. "I'd better telephone him. I will. No, I'd better not. Yes. No. Shall I? Well, I will. Hello! Hello, Central! Hurry up! Gramercy 816. What takes so long? Is this Gramercy 816? Mr. Monteith. Oh, isn't she smart? What keeps him? Is he out? No, there he is! Oh, joy! I must be very severe. Hello, Harry."

All these thoughts the spectator could follow. They ran, as it were, under her skin. There was no stolidity or phlegm. She was astoundingly alive and real. Unimportant, without sublimity of emotion or intellectual power, she was irresistibly real. The public understood all she told it, and adored her.

Her petulance, quick temper, pretty discontent, did not harm her on the screen, but helped immensely, for they gave her character. It was delicious to see her eyes narrow with sudden resentment or girlish malice and widen again with equally abrupt affection. She was so pretty that she could afford to act ugly.

It took time, however, to get Kedzie from the studio to the negative, then to the positive. There was editing to do, and it seemed to her that her most delicious bits had to be cut out, because Ferriday always took three or four thousand feet of film for every thousand he used. They had to cut out more Kedzie to let in the titles and subtitles, and it angered her to see how much space was given to other members of the cast. She simply loathed the scenes she was not the center of, and she developed an acerbity of protest against any "trespass" on her "rights" that proved her a genuine business woman.

She learned the tricks of the trade with magnificent speed. She was never so meek and helpless of expression as when she slipped in front of another actor or actress

and filled as much of the foreground as her slenderness permitted. When she was crowded into the background she knew how to divert attention to herself during the best moments of the other people in the scene. And she could most innocently spoil any bit that she did not like to do herself or have done by another.

In the studio she was speedily recognized as an ambitious young woman zealous for self-advancement. In fact, they called her a "reel hog" and a "glutton for footage." A number of minor feuds were turned into deep friendships through a common resentment at Kedzie's impartial robberies.

Ferriday did not object to these professional traits. They exist in all trades, and success is never won in large measure without them. Almost all businesses are little trusts, monopolies more or less tiny, more or less ruthless.

Ferriday delighted in Kedzie's battle for space with the other members of the troupe. They kept everybody intense. The lover loved her better on the screen for hating her personal avarice. Her mother in the picture was more meltingly tender in her caresses for wanting to scratch the little cat's eyes out. The clergyman who pointed her the way to heaven grew more ardently devout for having to grip the floor with his feet to keep the adoring Kedzie from edging him off his own pulpit.

This rivalry is better than any number of chaperons, and Kedzie was saved from any danger of falling in love with the unspeakably beautiful leading man by the ferocity of her jealousy of him. She had once, as a little girl in Nimrim, Missouri, nearly swooned at the glory of this Lorraine Melnotte, and she had written him a little letter of adoration, one of some nineteen he received that day from lovelorn girls about the globe.

When she met him first in the studio he was painted as delicately as a barber-pole, and he stood sweating in a scene under the full blast of a battery of sick green Cooper-Hewitt lights. He looked about three days dead and

loathsome as an iguana. He was in full evening dress, and Kedzie had always marveled at the snowiness of his linen.

Now she saw how he got the effect. He wore a yellow shirt, collar, tie, and waistcoat in order that the photographic result should be the purest white. The yellow linen was the completing horror under the spoiled mustard color of his face with its mouth the color of an overripe plum.

His expression did not redeem his appalling features that day, nor did his language help. While the cameraman leaned on his idle machine and looked weary Lorraine Melnotte was having a sweet little row with the actress playing his sainted mother. He was threatening to have her fired if she didn't keep her place.

That finished him for Kedzie. She could not tolerate professional jealousy. She never could. Her own was merely a defense of her dignity and her rights against the peculiarly impossible people who infested the studio. That was Kedzie's own phrase, for she had not lived with a poet long before she began to experiment with large words. She practised before a mirror any phrases she particularly liked. She had probably heard Ferriday use the expression and she got herself up on it till she was glib. Anybody who can be glib with "peculiarly impossible" is in a fair way to be articulate. All Kedzie needed was a little more certainty on her grammar; and her ear was giving her that.

Her contempt for Lorraine Melnotte culminated in a dark suspicion that that was not his real born name. If Anita Adair was Kedzie Thropp what would Lorraine Melnotte have been? It was a pretty problem in algebra. But Kedzie despised a man that would take another name. And such a name—as unworthy of a man as a box of chocolate fudge.

So the image of Mr. Melnotte fell out of the niche in her heart and went over into the gallery of her hates.

She fought him with every weapon and every foul thrust known to shy little women in dealing with big, blustering men. She loved to call him "Melnit" or "naughty Mel."

He was lost from the start and was soon begging to be released from his contract. The backers were too sure of his vogue, however, to let him go, and it was none of their affair how fiercely Adair and Melnotte indulged in mutual loathing, so long as their screen-love was so wholesomely sweet.

With Ferriday Kedzie's relations were more perilous. He had invented her and was patenting her. She dreaded his wisdom and accepted his least theory as gospel—at first. He combined a remote and godlike intellect with a bending and fatherly grace. And now and then, like the other gods of all the mythologies, he came down to earth in an amorous mood.

Now Kedzie's surety was her canny realization of the value of tantalism. She was not long left in ignorance of his record for flitting fancy and she felt that he would flit from her as soon as he conquered her. Her duty was plain.

She played him well and drove him frantic. It would have been hard to say whether he hated her or loved her more when he found her always just a little beyond. He had begun with the greatest gift in his power. He had promised her world-wide fame, and no other gift could count till he had made that good. And it would take a long, long while of incessant labor to build.

Ferriday belittled himself in Kedzie's eyes by his groans of baffled egotism. She could read his plots on his countenance, and thwart him in advance. But this was not always easy for her, and again and again he had only himself to blame for his non-success with Kedzie's heart. With Kedzie's fame he was having a very sudden and phenomenal triumph—if anything could be called phenomenal in a field which itself was phenomenal always.

CHAPTER XVI

FERRIDAY did not know, of course, that Kedzie was married. She hardly knew it herself now. Gilfoyle had been three weeks late in sending her the thirty dollars' fare to Chicago. Then she wrote him that she was doing fairly well at the studio and she would stick to her work. She sent him oceans of love, but she did not send him the thirty dollars.

Besides, he had borrowed it of her in the first place, and she had had to borrow more of Ferriday. She had neglected to pay him back. She needed so much for her new clothes and new expenses innumerable inflicted on her by her improved estate.

And, of course, she left the miserable little flat on the landlord's hands. He wasted a good deal of time trying to get the rent paid. Besides, it was rented in Gilfoyle's name and he was safe in Chicago. And yet not very safe, for Chicago has also its Bohemia, its clusters of real and imitation artists, its talkers and dabblers, as well as its toilers and achievers.

Gilfoyle found some wonderful Western sirens who listened to his poetry. They were new to him and he to them. His Eastern pronunciations fascinated them as they had fascinated Kedzie, and he soon found in them all the breeziness and wholesomeness of the great prairies which are found in the mid-Western women of literature.

Gilfoyle had apparently forgotten that his own wife was a mid-Westerness, and the least breezy, wholesome, prairian thing imaginable. He saw mid-Western women of all sorts about him, but he was of those who must have a

type for every section of humanity and who will not be shaken in their belief by any majority of exceptions.

When Gilfoyle got Kedzie's letter saying that she would not join him yet awhile he wrote her a letter of poetic grief at the separation. But poets, like the rest of us, are the better for getting a grief on paper and out of the system.

Kedzie did not answer his letter for a long while and he did not miss her answer much, for he was having his own little triumphs. The advertisements he wrote were receiving honorable mention at the office and he was having success with his poetry and his flirtations of evenings.

He returned to his boarding-house one night and looked at his face in the mirror, stared into the eyes that stared back. A certain melting and molten and molting lady had told him that he had poet's eyes like Julian Street's and was almost as witty. Gilfoyle tried with his shaving-glass and the bureau mirror to study the profile that someone else had compared to the cameonic visage of Richard Le Gallienne.

Gilfoyle was gloriously ashamed of himself. In the voice that some one else had compared to Charlie Towne's reading his own verses he addressed his reflection with scorn:

"You heartless dog! You ought to be shot—forgetting that you have a poor little deserted wife toiling in the great city. You're as bad as Lord Byron ever was."

Then he wrote a sonnet against his own perfidy and accepted confession as atonement and plenary indulgence.

He was one of those who, when they have cried, "I have sinned," hear a mysterious voice saying, "Poor sufferer, go and sin some more."

So he did, and he went the way of millions of lazy-minded, lazy-moraled husbands while Kedzie went the way of men and women who succeed by self-exploitation and count only that bad morals which is also bad business.

And that was the status of the matrimonial adventure of the Gilfoyles for the present. It made no perceptible difference to anybody that they were married—least of all to themselves—for the present. But of course Kedzie was obscurely preparing all this while for a tremendous explosion into publicity and into what is known as "the big money." And that was bound to make a vast difference to Gilfoyle as well as to Mrs. Gilfoyle.

In these all-revolutionary days a man had better be a little polite always to his wife, for in some totally unexpectable way she may suddenly prove to be a bigger man than he is, a money-getter, a fame or shame acquirer —if only by way of becoming the president of a suffrage association or a best-seller or an inventor of a popular doll.

And again, all this time—a very short time, considering the changes it made in everybody concerned—Ferriday was Kedzie's alternate hope and despair, good angel and bad, uplifter and down-yanker.

Sometimes he threatened to stop the picture and destroy it unless she kissed him. And she knew that he could and would do almost anything of that sort. Had not his backers threatened to murder him or sue him if he did not finish the big feature? At such times Kedzie usually kissed Ferriday to keep him quiet. But she was as careful not to give too many kisses as she had been not to put too many caramels in half a pound when she had clerked in the little candy-store. Nowadays she would pause and watch the quivering scale of policy intently with one more sweet poised as if it were worth its weight in gold. The ability to stop while the scale wavers in the tiny zone of just-a-little-too-little and just-a-little-too-much is what makes success in any business of man- or woman-kind.

It was not always easy for Kedzie to withhold that extra bonbon. There were times when Ferriday raised her hopes and her pride so high that she fairly squealed with love of him and hugged him. That would have been the destruction of Kedzie if there had not been the counter-

weight of conceit in Ferriday's soul, for at those times he would sigh to himself or aloud:

"You are loving me only because I am useful to you."

This thought always sobered and chilled Mr. Ferriday. He worked none the less for her and himself and he tried in a hundred ways to surprise the little witch into an adoration complete enough to make her forget herself, make her capable of that ultimate altruism to which a woman falls or rises when she stretches herself out on the altar of love.

Ferriday began to think seriously that the only way he could break Kedzie's pride completely would be to make her his wife. He began to wonder if that were not, after all, what she was driving at—or trying to drive him to.

Life will be so much more wholesome when women propose marriage as men do and have a plain, frank talk about it instead of their eternal business of veils and reticences, fugitive impulses real or coquettish, modesties real or faked.

Ferriday could not be sure of Kedzie, and he grew so curious to know that finally he broke out, "In the Lord's name, will you or will you not marry me, damn you?"

And Kedzie answered: "Of course not. I wouldn't dream of such a thing."

But that did not prove anything, either. Perhaps she merely wanted to trawl him along.

She had Ferriday almost crazy—at least she had added one more to his manias—when Jim Dyckman wandered into the studio and set up an entirely new series of ambitions and discontents.

CHAPTER XVII

CHARITY COE forgot her great moving-picture enterprise for a time in the agony of her discovery that her husband was disloyal and that the Church did not accept that as a cancellation of her own loyalty.

For a long time she was in such misery of uncertainty that she went up to the mountains to recover her strength. She came back at last, made simple and stoical somehow by the contrast of human pettiness with the serenity (as we call it) of those vast masses of débris that we poetize and humanize as patient giants.

Her absence had left Cheever entirely to his own devices and to Zada's. They had made up and fought and made up again dozens of times and settled down at length to that normal alternation of peace and conflict known as domestic life.

With Charity out of the way there was so little interruption to their communion that when she came back Zada forbade Cheever to meet her at the station, and he obeyed.

Charity felt that she had brought with her the weight of the mountains instead of their calm when she detrained in the thronged solitude of the Grand Central Terminal. And the house with its sympathetic family of servants only was as home-like as the Mammoth Cave.

She took up her work with a frenzy. The need of a man to act as her adjutant in the business details was imperative. She thought of Jim Dyckman again, and with a different thought.

When he pleaded to her before she had imagined that

she was at least officially a wife. Now she felt divorced and abandoned, a waif on the public mercy.

She wanted to talk to Jim because she felt so disprized and downtrodden that she wanted to see somebody who adored her. She felt wild impulses to throw herself into his keeping. She wanted to be bad just to spite the bad. But she merely convinced herself that she was wicked enough already and deserving of her punishment.

She made the moving-picture scheme a good excuse for asking Jim to grant her a talk—a business talk. To protect herself from him and from herself she made a convenience of Mrs. Neff's home. Jim met her there. She was not looking her best and her mood was one of artificial indirectness that offended him. He never dreamed that it was because she was afraid to show him how glad she was to see him.

He was furious at her—so he said he would do her bidding. She dumped the financial and mechanical ends of the enterprise on his hands and he accepted the burden. He had nothing else pressing for his time.

One of his first duties, Charity told him, was to call at the Hyperfilm Studio and try to engage that Mr. Ferriday for director and learn the ropes.

"While you're there you might inquire about that little girl you pulled out of the pool. I sent her there. They promised her a job. Her name was— I have it at home in my address-book. I'll telephone it to you."

And she did. She had no more acquaintance with the history Kedzie was making in the moving-picture world than she had of the sensational rise of the latest politician in Tibet. Neither had Jim.

He had been traveling about on his mother's yacht and in less correct societies, trying to convince himself that he was cured of Charity. He did not know that the first pictures of Anita Adair were causing lines to gather outside the moving-picture theaters of numberless cities and towns.

When his car halted before the big studio where Ferriday was high priest Jim might have been a traveler entering a temple in Lassa, for all he knew of its rites and its powers.

No more did the doorman know the power and place of Jim Dyckman. When Jim said he had an appointment with Mr. Ferriday the doorman thumbed him up the marble stairs. There were many doors, but no signs on them, and Dyckman blundered about. At length he turned down a corridor and found himself in the workshop.

A vast room it was, the floor hidden with low canvas walls and doors marked "Keep out." Overhead were girders of steel from which depended heavy chains supporting hundreds of slanting tubes glowing with green fire.

From somewhere in the inclosures came a voice in distress. It was the first time Dyckman ever heard Ferriday's voice, and it puzzled him as it cried:

"Come on, choke her—choke harder, you fool; you're not a masseur—you're a murderer. Now drag her across to the edge of the well. Pause, look back. Come on, Melnotte: yell at him! 'Stop, stop, you dog!' Turn round, Higgins; draw your knife. Go to it now! Give 'em a real fight. That's all right. Only a little cut. The blood looks good. Get up, Miss Adair; crawl away on hands and knees. Don't forget you've been choked. Now take the knife away, Melnotte. Rise; look triumphant; see the girl. Get to him, Miss Adair. Easy on the embrace: you're a shy little thing. 'My hero! you have saved me!' Now, Melnotte: 'Clarice! it is you! you!' Cut! How many feet, Jones?

"Now we'll take the scene in the vat of sulphuric acid. Is the tank ready? You go lie down and rest, Miss Adair. We won't want you for half an hour."

As Kedzie left the scene she found Dyckman waiting for her. He lifted his hat and spoke down at her:

"Pardon me, but you're Miss Adair, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Kedzie, with as much modesty as a queen

could show, incidentally noting that the man who bespoke her so timidly was plainly a real swell. She was getting so now that she could tell the real from the plated.

"I heard them murdering you in there and I— Well, Mrs. Cheever asked me to look you up and see how you were getting along. I see you are."

"Mrs. Cheever!" said Kedzie, searching her memory. Then, with great kindliness, "Oh yes! I remember her."

"You've forgotten me, I suppose. I had the pleasure —the sad pleasure of helping you out of the water at Mrs. Noxon's."

"Oh, Lord, yes," Kedzie cried, forgetting her rank. "You're Jim Dyckman—I mean, Mr. Dyckman."

"So you remember my name," he flushed. "Well, I must say!"

"I didn't remember to thank you," said Kedzie. "I was all damp and mad. I've often thought of writing to you." And she had.

"I wish you had," said Dyckman. "Well, well!"

He didn't know what to say, and so he laughed and she laughed and they were well acquainted. Then he thought of a good one.

"I pulled you out of the cold water, so it's your turn to pull me out of the hot."

"What hot?" said Kedzie.

"I've been sent up here to learn the trade."

Kedzie had a horrible feeling that he must have lost his money. Wouldn't it be just her luck to meet her first millionaire after he had become an ex-?

But Dyckman said that he had come to try and engage Mr. Ferriday, and that sounded so splendid to Kedzie that she snuggled closer. Ordinarily when a woman cowers under the eaves of a man's shoulder it is taken for a signal for amiabilities to begin.

Dyckman could not imagine that Kedzie was already as bad as all that. She wasn't. She was just trying to get as close as she could to a million dollars. Her feelings

were as innocent and as imbecile as those of the mobs that stand in line for the privilege of pump-handling a politician.

Jim Dyckman kept forgetting that he was so rich. He hated to be reminded of it. He did not suspect Kedzie of such a thought. He stared down at her and thought she was cruelly pretty. He wanted to tell her so, but he found himself saying:

"But I mustn't keep you. I heard somebody say that you were to lie down and rest up."

"Oh, that was only Mr. Ferriday. I'm not tired a bit."

"Ferriday. Oh yes, I'm forgetting him. He's the feller I've come to see."

"He can't be approached when he's working. Sit down, won't you?"

He sat down on an old bench and she sat down, too. She had never felt quite so contented as this. And Dyckman had not felt so teased by beauty in a longer time than he could remember.

Kedzie was as exotic to him as a Japanese doll. Her face was painted in picturesque blotches that reminded him of a toy-shop. Her eyes were made up with a delicate green that gave them an effect unknown to him.

She was dressed as a young farm girl with a sunbonnet a-dangle at the back of her neck, her curls trailing across her rounded shoulders and down upon her dreamy bosom. She sat and swung her little feet and looked up at him sidewise.

He forgot all about Ferriday, and when Ferriday came along did not see him. Kedzie did not tell him. She pretended not to see Ferriday, though she enjoyed enormously the shock it gave him to find her so much at ease with that big stranger.

Ferriday was so indignant at being snubbed in his own domain by his own creation that he sent Garfinkel to see who the fellow was and throw him out. Garfinkel came back with Dyckman, followed by Kedzie.

Before Garfinkel could present Dyckman to the great

Ferriday, Kedzie made the introduction. Dyckman was already her own property. She had seen him first.

Ferriday was jolted by the impact of the great name of Dyckman. He was restored by the suppliant attitude of his visitor. He said that he doubted if he could find the time to direct an amateur picture. Dyckman hastened to say:

"Of course, money is no object to us . . ."

"Nor to me," Ferriday said, coldly.

Dyckman went on as if he had not heard: ". . . Except that the more the show costs the less there is for the charity."

"I should be glad to donate my services to the cause," said Ferriday, who could be magnificent.

"Three cheers for you!" said Dyckman, who could not.

Ferriday had neither the time nor the patience for the task. But when the chance came to dazzle the rich by the rich generosity of working for nothing, he could not afford to let it pass. To tip a millionaire! He had to do that.

He saw incidentally that Kedzie was fairly hypnotized by Dyckman and Dyckman by her. His first flare of jealousy died out. To be cut out by a prince has always been a kind of ennoblement in itself.

Also one of Ferriday's inspirations came to him. If he could get those two infatuated with each other it would not only take Kedzie off his heart, but it might be made to redound to the further advantage of his own genius. A scheme occurred to him. He was building the scenario of it in the back room of his head while his guest occupied his parlor.

He wanted to be alone and he wanted Dyckman and Kedzie to be alone together. And so did Kedzie. Ferriday suggested:

"Perhaps Mr. Dyckman would like to look over the studio—and perhaps Miss Adair would show him about."

Kedzie started to cry, "You bet your boots," but she caught herself in time and shifted to, "I should be chawmed." Millionaires did not use plain words.

Then Dyckman said, "Great!"

He followed Kedzie wherever she led. He was as awkward and out of place as a school-boy at his first big dance. Kedzie showed him a murder scene being enacted under the bluesome light. She took great pains not to let any of it stain her skin. She showed him a comic scene with a skeletonic man on a comic bicycle. Dyckman roared when the other comedian lubricated the cyclist's joints with an oil-can.

Kedzie showed him the projection-room and told the operator to run off a bit of a scene in which she was revealed to no disadvantage. She sat alone in the dark with a million dollars that were crazy about her. She could tell that Dyckman was tremendously excited.

Here at last was her long-sought opportunity to rebuff the advances of a wicked plutocrat. But he didn't make any, and she might not have rebuffed them. Still, the air was a-quiver with that electricity generated almost audibly by a man and a woman alone in the dark.

Dyckman was ashamed of himself and of his arm for wanting to gather in that delectable partridge, but he behaved himself admirably.

He told her that she was a "corker," a "dream," and "one sweet song," and that the picture did not do her justice.

Kedzie showed him the other departments of the picture-factory and he was amazed at all she knew. So was she. He stayed a long while and saw everything and yet he said he would come again.

He suggested that it might be nice if Mr. Ferriday and Miss Adair would dine with him soon. Ferriday was free "to-morrow," and so they made it to-morrow evening at the Vanderbilt.

Kedzie was there and Dyckman was there, but a boy

brought a note from Mr. Ferriday saying that he was unavoidably prevented from being present.

Dyckman grinned: "We'll have to bear up under it the best we can. You won't run away just because your chaperon is gone, will you?"

Kedzie smiled and said she would stay. But she was puzzled. What was Ferriday up to? One always suspected that Ferriday was up to something and thinking of something other than what he did or said.

Kedzie was not ashamed of her clothes this time. Indeed, when she gave her opera-cloak to the maid she came out so resplendent that Jim Dyckman said:

"Zowie! but you're a— Whew! aren't you great? Some change-o from the little farm girl I saw up at the studio. I don't suppose you'll eat anything but a little bird-seed."

She was elated to see the *maître d'hôtel* shake hands with her escort and ask him how he was and where he had been. Jim apologized for neglecting to call recently, and the two sauntered like friends across to a table where half a dozen waiters bowed and smiled and welcomed the prodigal home.

When they were seated the headwaiter said, "The moosels vit sauce marinière are nize to-nide."

Dyckman shook his head: "Ump-umm! I'm on the water-wagon and the diet kitchen. Miss Adair can go as far as she likes, but I've got to stick to a little thick soup, a big, thick steak, and after, a little French pastry, some coffee, and a bottle of polly water—and I'll risk a mug of old musty." He turned to Kedzie: "And now I've ordered, what do you want? I never could order for anybody else."

Kedzie was disappointed in him. He was nothing like Ferriday. He didn't use a French word once. She was afraid to venture on her own.

"I'll take the same things," she said.

"Sensible lady," said Jim. "Women who work must eat."

Kedzie hated to be referred to as a worker by an idler. She little knew how much Jim Dyckman wished he were a worker.

She could not make him out. Her little hook had dragged out Leviathan and she was surprised to find how unlike he was to her plans for her first millionaire. He ate like a hungry man who ordered what he wanted and made no effort to want what he did not want. He had had so much elaborated food that he craved few courses and simple. He said what came into his head, without frills or pose. He was sincerely delighted with Kedzie and made neither secret nor poetry of it.

Toward the last of the dinner Kedzie ceased to try to find in him what was not there. She accepted him as the least affected person she had ever met. He could afford to be unaffected and careless and spontaneous. He had nothing to gain. He had everything already. Kedzie would have said that he ought to have been happy because of that, as if that were not as good an excuse for discontent as any. In any case, Kedzie said to herself:

"He's the real thing."

She wanted to be that very thing—that most difficult thing—real. It became her new ambition.

After the dinner Dyckman offered to take her home. He had a limousine waiting for him. She did not ask him to put her into a taxicab. She was not afraid to have him ride home with her. She was afraid he wouldn't. She was not ashamed of the apartment-house she was living in now. It was nothing wonderful, but all the money had been spent on the hall. And that was as far as Dyckman would get—yet.

Kedzie had acquired a serenity toward all the world except what she called "high society." In her mind the word *high* had the significance it has with reference to game that has been kept to the last critical moments, and trembles, exquisitely putrid, between being eaten immediately and being thrown away soon.

There is enough and to spare of that high element among the wealthy, but so there is among the poor and among all the middlings. Kedzie had met with it on her way up, and she expected to find it in Dyckman. She looked forward to a thrilling adventure.

She could not have imagined that Dyckman was far more afraid of her than she of him. She was so tiny and he so big that she terrorized him as a mouse an elephant, or a baby a saddle-horse. The elephant is probably afraid that he will squash the little gliding insect, the horse that he might step on the child.

The disparity between Jim Dyckman and Kedzie was not so great, and they were both of the same species. But he felt a kind of terror of her. And yet she fascinated him as an interesting toy that laughed and talked and probably would not say "Mamma!" if squeezed.

Dyckman had been lonely and blue, rejected and dejected. Kedzie was something different. He had known lots of actresses, large and small, stately, learned, cheap, stupid, brilliant, bad, good, gorgeous, shabby, wanton, icy. But Kedzie was his first movie actress. She dwelt in a strange realm of unknown colors and machineries.

She was a new toy in a new toyhouse—a whole Noah's ark of queer toys. He wanted to play with those toys. She made him a *revenant* to childhood. Or, as he put it:

"Gee! but you make me feel as silly as a kid."

That surprised Kedzie. It was not the sort of talk she expected from a world which was stranger to her than the movie studio to him. He was perfectly natural, and that threw her into a spasm of artificiality.

He sat staring down at her. He put his hands under his knees and sat on them to keep them from touching her, as they wanted to. For all he knew, she was covered with fresh paint. That made her practically irresistible. Would it come off if he kissed her? He had to find out.

Finally he said, so helplessly, passively, that it would be more accurate to say it was said by him:

"Say, Miss Adair, I'm a dead-goner if you don't gimme a kiss."

Kedzie was horrified. Skip Magruder would have been eleganter than that. She answered, with dignity:

"Certainly, if you so desire."

That ought to have chaperoned him back to his senses, but he was too far gone. His long arms shot out, went round her, gathered her up to his breast. His high head came down like a swan's, and his lips pressed hers.

Whatever her soul was, her flesh was all girlhood in one flower of lithe stem, leaf, petal, sepal, and perfume. There was nothing of the opiate poppy, the ominous orchid, or even that velvet voluptuary, the rose. She was like a great pink, sweet, shy, fragrant, common wild honeysuckle blossom.

Jim Dyckman was so whelmed by the youth and flavor of her that his rapture exploded in an unsmothered gasp:

"Golly! but you're great!"

Kedzie was heartbroken. Gilfoyle had done better than that. She had been kissed by several million dollars, and she was not satisfied!

But Dyckman was. He felt that Kedzie had solved the problem of Charity Coe. She had cleared his soul of that hopeless obsession—he thought—just then.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN a young man suddenly goes mad in a cab, grapples the young woman who has intrusted herself to his protection, pins her arms to her sides, squeezes her torso till her bones crunch and she has no breath to squawk with, then kisses her deaf and dumb and blind, it is still a nice question which of the two is the helpless one and which has overpowered the other.

Appearances are never more deceitful than in such attacks, and while eye-witnesses are infrequent, they are also untrustworthy. They cannot even tell which of the two is victim of the outrage. The motionless gazelle in the folds of the constrictor may be in full control of the situation.

It undoubtedly has happened, oftener than it should have, in the history of the world that young men have made these onsets without just provocation and have been properly slapped, horsewhipped, or shot for their unwelcome violence. It has also happened that young men have failed to make these onsets when they would have been welcome.

But the perfection of the womanly art of self-pretense is when she subtly wills the young man to overpower her and is so carried away by her own success that she forgets who started it. She droops, swoons, shivers before the fury of her own inspiration, and cries out, with absolute sincerity: "How dare you! How could you! What made you!" or simply moans, "Why, Oswald!" and resists invitingly.

Kedzie had been hoping and praying that Jim Dyckman would kiss her, and mutely daring him to. Yet when he obeyed her tacit behest and asked her permission she was too frightened to refuse. He was stronger than she expected, and he held her longer. When at last she came out for air she was shattered with a pleasant horror.

She barely had the strength to gasp, "Why, Mr. Dyckman, aren't you awful?" and time to straighten her jumbled hat and hair when her apartment-building drew up alongside the limousine and came to a halt.

Dyckman pleaded, like a half-witted booby, "Let's take a little longer ride."

But she remembered her dignity and said, with imperial scorn, "I should hope not!"

She permitted him to help her out.

He said: "When may I see you again? Soon, please!"

She smiled, with a hurt patience, and answered, "Not for a long while."

He chuckled: "To-morrow, eh? That's great!"

She wished that he would not say, "That's great." If he would only say, "Ripping!" or, "I say, that's ripping!" or, "Awfully good of you," or, "No end"—anything swagger. But he would not swagger.

He escorted her to the elevator, where she gave him a queenly hand and murmured, "Good night!"

He watched her go up like *Medea in machina;* then he turned away and stumbled back into his limousine. It was still fragrant from her presence. The perfume she was using then was a rather aggressive essence of a lingering tenacity upon the atmosphere. But Dyckman was so excited that he liked it. The limousine could hardly contain him.

Kedzie felicitated herself on escaping from his thrall just in time to avoid being stupefied by it. She thanked Heaven that she had not flung her arms around him and claimed him for her own. She had the cleverness of elusion that her sex displays in all the species, from Cleo-

patras to clams, from butterflies to rhinoceroses. How wisely they practise to evade what they demand, leaving the stupid male to ponder the mysteries of womankind!

When Kedzie reached her mirror she told the approving person she found there that she was doing pretty well for a poor young girl not long in from the country. She postured joyously as she undressed, and danced a feminine war-dance in much the same costume that she wore when Jim Dyckman fished her out of the pool at Newport. She sang:

"I dreamt that I fell in a mar-arble pool
With nobles and swells on all si-i-ides."

She had slapped her rescuer's hands away then and groaned to learn that she had driven off a famous plutocrat. But now he was back; indeed he was in the pool now, and she had him on her hook. He had grievously disappointed her by turning out to be a commonplace young man with no gilt on his phrases. But one must be merciful to a million dollars.

The next morning she dreamed of him as a suitor presenting her with a bag of gold instead of a bouquet. Just as she reached for it the telephone rang and a hall-boyish voice told her that it was seven o'clock.

This was the midnight alarm to Cinderella, and she became again a poor working-girl. She had to abandon her prince and run from the palace of dreams to the studio of toil.

She was a trifle surly when she confronted Ferriday. He studied her, smilingly queerly and overplaying indifference:

"Have a nice dinner last night?"

Kedzie fixed him with a skewery glare: "What's your little game? Why did you turn up missing?"

"I had another engagement. Didn't you get my note?"

"Ah, behave, behave!" said Kedzie, then blushed at the

plebeian phrase. She was beginning to have a quickly remorseful ear. As soon as she should learn to hear her first thoughts first, and suppress them unspoken, she would be a made lady.

"Oh, you're a true artist, Anita," said Ferriday. "Nothing can hinder your flight into the empyrean."

"Don't sing it. Explain it," Kedzie sneered.

Ferriday laughed so delightedly that he must embrace her. She shoved him back and brushed the imaginary dust of his contact from the shoulders that had but lately been compressed by a million dollars.

"I see you landed him," said Ferriday.

"And I see that all your talk about loving me so much was just a fake," said Kedzie.

"Why do you say that? I adore you."

"If you did, would you throw me at the head of another fellow?" asked Kedzie.

"If it was for the advancement of your career, yes," Ferriday insisted.

"What's Mr. Dyckman got to do with my career?"

"He can make it, if he doesn't break it."

"Come again."

"If you fall in love with that big thug, or if you play him for a limousine like a chorus-girl on the make, your career is gone. But if you use him for your future—well, I have a little scheme that might bounce you up to the sky in a hurry. You could have your millionaire and your fame as well."

"What's the little scheme, Ferri darling?"

"I'll tell you later. We've got to go to the projection-room and see your new film run off. It's assembled, cut, subtitled, ready for the market. Come along."

Kedzie went along and sat in the dark room watching the reel go by. Her other selves came forth in troops to reveal themselves: Kedzie the poor little shy girl, for she was that at times; Kedzie the petulant, the revengeful, the forgiving; Kedzie on her knees in prayer—she

prayed at times, as everybody does, the most villainous no less ardently than the most blameless; Kedzie dancing; Kedzie flirting, in love, tempted, tipsy; Kedzie seduced, deserted, forgiven, converted, happily married; Kedzie a mother with a little hired baby at her little breast. There was even a picture of her in a vision as a sweet old lady with snowy hair about her face, and she was surrounded by grown men who were her sons, and young mothers who were her daughters. The unending magic of the moving pictures had enabled her to see hersel' as ithers saw her, and as she saw hersel', and as nobody should ever see her.

Kedzie doted on the picture of herself as a dear old lady leaning on her old husband among their children. She shed tears over that delightful, most unusual, privilege of witnessing herself peacefully, blessedly ancient.

Whether she ever reached old age and had a husband living then and children grown is beyond the knowledge of this chronicle or its prophecy, for this book goes only so far as 1917. But just for a venture, assuming Kedzie to be about twenty in 1916, that would make Kedzie born four years back in the last century. Now, adding sixty to 1896 brings one to 1956; and what the world will be like then—and who'll be in it or what they may be doing, how dressing, if at all, what riding in, fighting about, agreeing upon—it were folly to guess at.

It is safe to say only that people will then be very much at heart what they are to-day and were in the days when the Assyrian women and men felt as we do about most things. Kedzie will be scolding her children or her grandchildren and telling them that in her day little girls did not speak disrespectfully to their parents or run away from them or do immodest, forward things.

That much is certain to be true, as it has always been. The critics of then will be saying that there are no great novelists in 1956 such as there were in 1916, when giants wrote, but not for money or for cheap sensations.

They will laud the Wilsonian era when America not only knew a millennium of golden fiction, poetry, drama, humor, sculpture, painting, architecture, and engineering, but revealed its greatness in moving-picture classics, in a lofty conception of the dance as an eloquence; when the nation acted as a sister of charity to bleeding Europe, pouring eleemosynary millions from the cornucopia stretched across the sea, and finally entered the war with reluctant majesty and unexampled might, her citizens unanimously patriotic. Ye gods! even the politicians will be statesmen and their debates classics.

Critics of then will be regretting that American fiction, poetry, drama, art, and journalism are so inferior to foreign work, and foreign critics will admit it and tell them why. Some military writers will be pointing out that war is no longer possible, and others will be crying out that it is inevitable and America unprepared.

Doctors will be complaining that modern restlessness is creating new nervous diseases, as doctors did in 1916 A.D., B.C., and B.A. (which is, Before Adam). Doctors will complain that modern mothers do not nurse their own babies—which has always been both true and untrue—and that women do not wear enough clothes for health, not to mention modesty.

In fact, Kedzie, if she lives, will find the spirit of the world almost altogether what grandmothers have always found it. But Kedzie must be left to find this out for herself.

When, then, Kedzie saw how beautifully she photographed and how well she looked as an old lady, she wept rapturously and sighed, "I'll never give up the pictures."

Ferriday sighed, too, for that meant to his knowing soul that she was not long for this movie world. But he did not tell her so. He told her:

"You're as wise as you are beautiful. You'll be as famous as you'll be rich. And this Dyckman lad can hurry things up."

"How?" asked Kedzie, already foreseeing his game.

"The backers of the Hyperfilm Company are getting writer's cramp in the spending hand. They call it conservatism, but it's really cowardice. The moving-picture business has gone from the Golconda to the gambling stage. A few years ago nearly anybody could get rich in a minute. A lot of cheap photographers and street-car conductors were caught in a cloudburst of money and thought they made it. They treated money like rain, and the wastefulness in this trade has been rivaled by nothing recent except the European war. Some of the biggest studios are dark; some of the leaders of yesterday are so bankrupt that their banks don't dare let 'em drop for fear they'll bust and blow up the whole business. Most of the actors are not getting half what they're advertised to get, but they're getting four times what they ought to get.

"There are a few men and women who are earning even more than they are getting, and that's a million a minute. Now, the one chance for you, Anita, is to have some tremendous personal backing. You've come into the game a little late. This firm you're with is tottering. They blame me for it, but it's not my fault altogether. Anyway, this company is riding for a fall, and down we may all go in the dust with a dozen other big companies, any day."

Kedzie's heart stopped. In the dark she clutched Ferriday's arm so tightly that he ouched. To have her career smashed at its beginning would be just her luck. It grew suddenly more dear than ever, because it was imperiled. The thought of having her pictures fail of their mission throughout the world was as hideous as was the knowledge to Carlyle that the only manuscript of his history was but a shovelful of ashes.

Ferriday put his arm about her, and she crept in under his chin for safety. She felt very cozy to him, there, and he rejoiced that he had her his at last. Then as before

he saw that he was no more to her than an umbrella or an awning in a shower. He wanted to fling her away; but she was still to him an invention to patent and promote. So he told her:

"If you can persuade this Dyckman to boost your career, get behind you with a bunch of kale and whoop up the publicity, we can stampede the public, and the little theater managers will mob the exchanges for reels of you. It's only a question of money, Anita. Talk about the Archimedean lever! Give me the crowbar of advertising, and I'll set the earth rolling the other way round so the sun will rise in the west and print no other pictures but yours.

"There isn't room for everybody in the movie business any more. There's room only for the people who wear lightning-rods and stand on solid gold pedestals that won't wash away. Go after your young millionaire, Anita, and put his money to work."

Kedzie pondered. She brought to bear on the problem all the strategic intuition of her sex. She saw the importance of getting Dyckman's money into circulation. She was afraid it might not be easy.

Kedzie sighed: "It's a little early for me to ask a gentleman I've only met a couple o' times to kindly pass the millions. He must have met a lot of women by now who've held out their hands to him and said, 'Please,' and not got anything but the cold boiled eye. I don't know much about millionaires, but I have a feeling that if they started giving the money out to every girl they met, they'd last just about as long as a real bargain does in Macy's. The women would trample them to death and tear one another to pieces."

"But Dyckman's crazy about you, Anita. I could see it in his eyes. He's plumb daffy."

"Maybe so and maybe not. Maybe he's that way with every girl under forty. I've never seen him work, but I've seen him in the midst of that Newport bunch and

they've got me lashed to the mast for clothes, looks, language, and everything."

"You're a novelty to him, Anita. He's tired of those *blasées* creatures."

"They didn't look very blah-zay to me. They seemed to be up and doing every minute. But supposing he was crazy about me, if I said to him, 'You can have two kisses for a million dollars apiece?' can you see him begin to holler: 'Where am I? Please take me home!'"

Ferriday sighed: "Perhaps you're right. It wouldn't do to give a mercenary look to your interest in him too soon. Let me talk to him."

"What's your peculiar charm?"

"I'd put it up to him as a business proposition. I'd say, 'The moving-picture field is the greatest gold-field in the world.' I'd tell him how many hundred thousand theaters there are in the world, all of them eager for your pictures and only needing to be told about them. I'd tell him that for every dollar he put in he'd take out ten, in addition to furthering the artistic glory of the most beautiful genius on the dramatic horizon. I'd show him how he couldn't lose."

"But you just said—"

"Oh, I know, but we can't put on the screen everything we say in the projection-room. And it is a fact that there is big money in the movies."

"There must be," said Kedzie, "if as much has been sunk in 'em as you say."

"Yes, and it's all there for the right man to dig up if he only goes about it intelligently. Let me talk to him."

Kedzie thought hard. Then she said: "No! Not yet! You'd only scare him away. I'll do my best to get him interested in me, and you do your best to get him interested in the business; and then when the time is just right we can talk turkey. But not now, Ferri, not yet."

"You're as wise as you are beautiful," said Ferriday,

again. "I can't see your beauty, but your wisdom shines in the dark. We'll do great things together, Anita."

His arm tightened around her, reminding her that she was still in his elbow. Before she was quite alive to his purpose his lips touched her cheek.

"Don't do that!" she snapped. "How dare you!"

He laughed: "I forgot. The price on your kisses has just skyrocketed to a million apiece. Don't forget my commission."

She growled pettishly. He spoke more soberly:

"You need me yet, little lady. Don't quench my enthusiasms too roughly or I might take up some other pretty little girl as my medium of expression. There are lots and lots of pretties born every minute, but it takes years to make a director like me."

And she knew that this was true.

"I was only fooling," she said. "Don't be mad at me. You can kiss me if you want to."

"I don't want to," he said, as hurt as an overgrown boy or a prima donna.

The door opened, and a wave of light swept into the room. A voice followed it.

"Is Miss Adair in there?"

"Yes," Kedzie answered, in confusion.

"Gent'man to see you."

It was Jim Dyckman. He followed closely and entered the room just as Ferriday found the electric button and switched on the light.

Kedzie and Ferriday were both encouraged when they saw a look of jealous suspicion cross his face. Ferriday hastened to explain:

"We've been editing Miss Adair's new film. Like to see an advance edition of it?"

"Love to," said Dyckman.

"Oh, Simpson, run that last picture through again," Ferriday called through a little hole in the wall.

A faint "All right, sir" responded.

Kedzie led Dyckman to a chair and took the next one to it.

Ferriday beamed on them and switched on the dark. Then, as if by a divine miracle, the screen at the end of the room became a world of life and light. People were there, and places. Mountains were swung into view and removed. Palaces were decreed and annulled. Fields blossomed with flowers; ballrooms swirled; streets seethed.

Anita Adair was created luminous, seraphic, composed of light and emotion. She came so near and so large that her very thoughts seemed to be photographed. She drifted away; she smiled, danced, wept, and made her human appeal with angelic eloquence.

Dyckman groaned with the very affliction of her charm. She pleased him so fiercely that he swore about it. He cried out in the dark that she was the blank-blankest little witch in the world. Then he groveled in apology, as if his profanity had not been the ultimate gallantry.

When the picture was finished he turned to Kedzie and said, "My God, you're great!" He turned to Ferriday. "Isn't she, Mr.—Fenimore?"

"I think so," said Ferriday; "and the world will think so soon."

Kedzie shook her head. "I'm only a beginner. I don't know anything at all."

"Why, you're a genius!" Dyckman exploded. "You're simply great. You know everything; you—"

Ferriday touched him on the arm. "We mustn't spoil her. There is a charm and meekness about her that we must not lose."

Dyckman swallowed his other great's and after profound thought said, "Let's lunch somewhere."

Ferriday excused himself, but said that the air would be good for Miss Adair. She was working too hard.

So she took the air.

Dyckman had come to the studio with Charity's business as an excuse. He had forgotten to give the excuse, and now he had forgotten the business. He did not know that he was now Kedzie Thropp's business. And she was minding her own business.

CHAPTER XIX

PETER CHEEVER was going to dictagraph to his wife. The quaint charm of the dictagram is that the sender does not know he is sending it. It is a good deal like an astral something or other.

Peter had often telegraphed his wife, telephoned her, and wirelessed her. Sometimes what he had sent her was not the truth. But now she was going to hear from him straight. She would have all the advantages of the invisible cloak and the ring of Gyges—eavesdropping made easy and brought to a science, a combination of perfect alibi with intimate propinquity.

Small wonder that the device which justice has made such use of should be speedily seized upon by other interests. Everything, indeed, that helps virtue helps evil, too. And love and hate find speedy employment for all the conquests that science can make upon the physical forces of the universe.

How Charity's motives stood in heaven there is no telling. It is safe to say that they were the usual human mixture of selfish and altruistic, wise and foolish, honorable and impudent, profitable and ruinous. She came by the dictagraphic idea very gradually. She had plentiful leisure since she had taken a distaste for good works. She had been so roughly handled by the world she was toiling for that she decided to let it get along for a while without her.

It was a benumbing shock to learn definitely that her husband was in liaison with a definite person, and to be

confronted in shabby clothes with that person all dressed up. When she hurried to the Church for mercy it was desolation to learn from the pulpit that her heart clamor for divorce was not a cleanly and aseptic impulse, but an impious contribution to the filthy social condition of the United States.

Charity had no one to confide in, and she had no new grievance to air. Everybody else had evidently been long assured of her husband's profligacy. For her to wake up to it only now and run bruiting the stale information would be a ridiculous nuisance—a newsgirl howling yesterday's extra to to-day's busy crowd.

Besides, she had in her time known how uninteresting and unwelcome is the celebrant of one's own misfortunes. Husbands and wives who tell of their bad luck are entertaining only so long as they are spicy and sportsmanlike. When they ask for a solution they are embarrassing, since advice is impossible for moral people. The truly good must advise him or her either to keep quiet or to quit. But to say "Keep quiet!" is to say "Don't disturb the adultery," while to say "Quit!" is to say "Commit divorce!" which is far worse, according to the best people.

We have always had adultery and got along beautifully, while divorce is new and American and intolerable. Of course, one can and sometimes does advise a legal separation, but that comes hard to minds that face facts, since separation is only a license to—well, we all know what separation amounts to; it really cannot be prettily described.

Charity, left alone at the three-forked road of divorce, complacency, or separation, sank down and waited in dull misery for help or solution, as do most of the poor wayfarers who come upon such a break in their path of matrimony. She imagined Cheever with Zada and wondered what peculiar incantations Zada used to hold him so long. She wished that she had positive evidence against

him—not for public use, but as a weapon of self-defense. She felt that from his pulpit Doctor Mosely had challenged her to a spiritual duel in that sermon against divorce and remarriage of either guilty or innocent.

Also she began to want to get evidence to silence her own soul with. She wanted to get over loving Cheever. To want to be cured of such an ailment is already the beginning of cure.

Abruptly the idea came to her to put a detective on the track of Zada and Cheever. She had no acquaintance in that field, and it was a matter of importance that she should not put herself in the hands of an indelicate detective. She ought to have consulted a lawyer first, but her soul preferred the risk of disaster to the shame of asking counsel.

She consulted the newspapers and found a number of advertisements, some of them a little too mysterious, a little too promiseful. But she took a chance on the Hodshon & Hindley Bureau, especially as it advertised a night telephone, and it was night when she reached her decision.

She surprised Mr. Hodshon in the bosom of his family. He was dandling a new baby in the air and trying not to step on the penultimate child, who was treating one of his legs as a tree. When the telephone rang he tossed the latest edition to its mother and hobbled to the table, trying to tear loose the clinger, for it does not sound well to hear a child gurgling at a detective's elbow.

When Charity told Hodshon who she was his eyes popped and he was greatly excited. When she asked Mr. Hodshon to call at once he looked at his family and his slippers and said he didn't see how he could till the next day. Charity did not want to go to a detective's office in broad daylight or to have anybody see a detective coming to her house. She had an idea that a detective could be recognized at once by his disguise. He probably could be if he wore one; and he usually can be,

anyway, if any one is looking for him. But she could not get Hodshon till she threatened to telephone elsewhere. At that, he said he would postpone his other engagement and come right up.

Charity was disappointed in Mr. Hodshon. He looked so ordinary, and yet he must know such terrible things about people. We always expect doctors, lawyers, priests, and detectives to show the scars of the searing things they know. As if we did not all of us know enough about ourselves and others to eat our eyes out, if knowledge were corrosive!

Charity was further disappointed in Hodshon's lack of picturesqueness. He was like no detective she had read about between Sherlock Holmes and Philo Gubb. He was like no detective at all. It was almost impossible to accept him as her agent.

He seemed eager to help, however, and when she told him that she suspected her husband of being overly friendly with an insect named Zada L'Etoile, and that she wanted them shadowed, he betrayed a proper agitation.

Now, of course, women's scandals are no more of a luxury to a detective than their legs were to the 'bus-driver of tradition or to any one in knee-skirted 1916. Mr. Hodshon was a good man as good men go, though he was capable of the little dishonesties and compromises with truth that characterize every profession. A man simply cannot succeed as a teacher, lawyer, doctor, merchant, thief, author, scientist, or anything else if he blurts out everything he knows or believes. No preacher could occupy a pulpit for two Sundays who told just what he actually thought or knew or could find out. The detective is equally compelled to manipulate the truth.

Hodshon gave his soul to Charity's cause. He outlined the various ways of establishing Cheever's guilt and promised that the agency would keep him shadowed and make a record of all his hours.

"It 'll take some time to get the goods on 'em good,"

he explained, "but there's ways we got. When we learn what we got to know we'll arrange it and tip you off. Then you and me will go to the door and break in on the parties at the right moment, and—"

"No, Thank You!" said Charity, with a firm pressure on each word.

"You better get some friend to go with us, for a detective needs c'roboration, you know. The courts won't accept a detective's uns'ported testimony. And if you could know what some of these crooks are capable of you wouldn't wonder. Is that all right? We get the goods on 'em and you have a friend ready, and we'll bust in on the parties, and—"

"No, thank you!" said Charity, with undiminished enthusiasm.

This stumped Mr. Hodshon. She amazed him further. "I don't intend to bring this case into court. I don't want to satisfy any judge but myself."

But what he had said about the credibility of the unsupported detective had set Charity to thinking. It would be folly to pay these curious persons to collect evidence that was worthless when collected. She mused aloud:

"Would it be possible—of course it wouldn't—but if it were, what I should like would be to be able to see my hu—Mr. Ch—those two persons without their knowing about it at all. Of course that's impossible, isn't it?"

"Well, it was a few years ago, but we can do wonders nowadays. There's the little dictagraph. We could string one up for you and give you the usual stenographic report—or you could go and listen in yourself."

"Could I really?" Charity gasped, and she began to shiver with the frightfulness of the opportunity.

"Surest thing you know," said Hodshon.

"But how could you install a dictagraph without their finding it out?"

"Easiest thing you know. We'll probably have to rent an apartment in the same building or another one

near-by, and—one of the hall-boys there may be workin' for us now. If not, we can usually bring him in. There's a hundred ways to get into a house and put the little dictor behind a picture or somewheres and lead the wire out to us."

"But can you really hear—if they talk low?" Charity mumbled, with dread.

"Let 'em whisper!" said Hodshon. "The little fellow just eats a whisper. Leave it to us, madam, and we'll surprise you."

The compact was made. Charity suggested an advance payment as a retainer, and Hodshon permitted her to write a check and hand it to him before he assured her that it wasn't necessary.

He went away and left Charity in a state of nerves. Her curiosity was a mania, but she feared that assuaging it might leave her in a worse plight. She hated herself for her enterprise and was tempted to cancel it. But when she heard Cheever come home at midnight and go to his room without speaking to her she felt a grim resentment toward him that was like a young hate with a big future.

Every night Charity received a typewritten document describing Cheever's itinerary for the day. The mute, inglorious Boswell took him up at the front steps, heeled him to his office, out to lunch, back to the office, thence to wherever he went.

The name of Zada did not appear in the first report at all, but on the second day she met Cheever at luncheon, and he went shopping with her. Charity, reading, flushed to learn that he bought her neither jewelry nor hats, but household supplies and delicacies. He went with her to her apartment and thence with her to dinner and the theater and then back, and thence again after an hour to his home.

The minute chronicle of his outdoor doings, intercalated with the maddening bafflement of his life in that im-

penetrable apartment, made such dramatic reading as Charity had never known. She grew haggard with waiting for the arrival of her little private daily newspaper. When she saw Cheever she could hardly keep from screaming at him what she knew. His every entrance into the house became a hideous insult. She felt that it was herself who was the kept woman and not the other.

She longed to take the documents and visit the Reverend Doctor Mosely with them, make him read them and tell her if he still thought it was her duty to endure such infamy. She felt that the good doctor would advise her to lay them before Cheever and confound him with guilt, bring him to what the preachers call "a realizing sense" of it and win him home.

She was tempted to try the imaginary advice on Cheever, but something held her back. She wondered what it was, till suddenly she came to a realizing sense of one fearful bit of news: her soul had so changed toward him, her love had turned to such disgust, that she was afraid he might come back to her! He might cast off his discovered partner in guilt and renew his old claim to Charity's soul and body. That would be degradation indeed!

Now she was convinced that her love had starved even unto death, that it was a corpse in her home, corrupted the air and must be removed.

CHAPTER XX

KEDZIE lay extended on her *chaise longue*, looking as much unlike Madame Récamier as one could look who was so pretty a woman. A Sunday supplement dropped from her hand and joined the heap of papers on the floor. Kedzie was tired of looking at pictures of herself.

She had had to look over all the papers, since she was in them all. At least her other self, Anita Adair, was in them.

In every paper there was a large advertisement with a large picture of her and the names of the theaters at which she would appear simultaneously in her new film. In the critical pages devoted to the moving-picture world there were also pictures of her and at least a little text.

In two or three of the papers there were interviews with the new comet; in others were articles by her. These entertained her at first, because she had never seen the interviewers or the articles. She had not thought many of the thoughts attached to her name. The press agent of the Hyperfilm Company had written everything. He reveled in his new star, for the editors were cordial toward her "press stuff." They "ate it up," "gave it spread."

This was the less surprising since the advertising-man of the Hyperfilm Company was so lavish with purchase of space that the publishers could well afford to throw in a little free reading matter—especially since it did not cost them a cent for the copy.

The press agent unaided has a hard life, but when the

advertising-man gives him his arm he is welcome to the most select columns.

In some of the interviews Kedzie gave opinions she had never held on themes she had never heard of. When she read that her favorite poet was Rabindranath Tagore she wondered who that "gink" was. When she read that she owed her figure to certain strenuous flexion exercises she decided that they might be worth trying some day. Her advice to beginners in the motion-picture field proved very interesting. She wondered how she had ever got along without it.

She was greatly excited by an article of hers in which she told of the terrific adventures she had had in and out of the studio; there was one time when an angry tiger would have torn her to pieces if she had not had the presence of mind to play dead. She read of another occasion when she had either to spoil a good film or endanger her existence as the automobile she was steering refused to answer the brake and plunged over a cliff. Of course she would not ruin the film. By some miracle she escaped with only a few broken bones, and after a week in the hospital returned to the interrupted picture. These old stories were told with such simple sincerity that she almost believed them. But she tossed them aside and sneered:

"Bunc!"

She yawned over her own published portraits—and to be able to do that is to be surfeited indeed.

Suddenly Kedzie stopped purring, thought fiercely, whirled to her flank; her hands went among the papers. She remembered something, found it at last, an article she had glanced at and forgotten for the moment.

She snatched it up and read. It discussed the earning powers of several film queens. It credited them with salaries ten or twenty times as much as hers. Two or three of them had companies of their own with their names at the head of their films.

Kedzie groaned. She rose and paced the floor, shamed, trapped, humbled. The misers of the Hyperfilm Company paid her a beggarly hundred dollars a week! merely featured her among other stars of greater magnitude, while certain women had two thousand a week and were "incorporated," whatever that was!

Kedzie longed to get at Ferriday and tell him what a sneak he was to lure her into such a web and tie her up with such cheap ropes. She would break her bonds and fling them in his face.

She slid abruptly to the floor and began to go over the film pages again, comparing her portraits with the portraits of those higher-paid creatures. She hated vanity and could not endure it in other women; it was a mere observation of a self-evident fact that she was prettier than all the other film queens put together. She sat there sneering at the presumptuousness of screen idols whom she had almost literally worshiped a year before.

Then something gave her pause. The celluloid-queens had certain pages allotted to them, the actresses certain pages.

But there was another realm where women were portrayed in fashionable gowns—débutantes, brides, matrons. And their realm was called "The Social World." These women toiled not, earned not; they only spent money and time as they pleased. They were in "society," and she was out of it. They were ladies and she was a working-woman.

Now Kedzie's cake was dough indeed. Now her pride was shame. She did not want to be a film queen. She did not want to work for any sum a week. She wanted to be a débutante and a bride and a matron.

She had never had a coming-out party, and never would have. She studied the aristocrats, put their portraits on her dressing-table and tried to copy their simple grandeur in her mirror. But she lacked a certain some-

thing. She didn't know a human being who was swell to use as a model.

Oh yes, she did—one—Jim Dyckman.

A dark design came to her to dally with him no longer. He had dragged her out of that pool at Newport; now he must drag her into the swim.

The telephone-bell rang. The hall-boy said:

"A gen'leman to see you—Mistoo Ferriday."

"Send him along."

"He's on the way now."

"Oh, all right."

As Kedzie hung up the receiver it occurred to her that this little interchange was about the un-swellest thing she had ever done. She had been heedless of the convenances. Her business life made her responsible only to herself, and she felt able to take care of herself anywhere.

Now it came over her that she could not aspire to aristocracy and allow negro hall-boys to send men up in the elevator and telephone her afterward. She snatched up the telephone and said:

"That you?"

"Yassum, Miss Adair."

"How dare you send anybody up without sending the name up first?"

"Why, you nevva—"

"Who do you think I am that I permit anybody to walk in on me?"

"Why, we alwiz—"

"The idea of such a thing! It's disgraceful."

"Why, I'm sorry, but—"

"Don't ever do it again."

"No'm."

She slapped the receiver on the hook and fumed again, realizing that a something of elegance had been lacking in her tirade.

The door-bell rang, and she did not wait for her maid,

but answered it in angry person. Ferriday beamed on her.

"Oh, it's you. You didn't stop to ask if I was visible. You just came right on up, didn't you?"

He whispered: "Pardon me. Somebody else is here. Exit laughingly!"

That was insult on insult.

"Stop it! There is not anybody else. Come back. What do you want?"

He came back, his laughter changed to rage.

"Look here, you impudent little upstart from nowhere! I invented you, and if you're not careful I'll destroy you."

"Is that so?" she answered; then, like Mr. Charles Van Loan's baseball hero, she realized with regret that the remark was not brilliant as repartee.

Ferriday was too wroth to do much better:

"Yes, that's so. You little nobody!"

"Nobody!" she laughed, pointing to the newspapers spangled with her portraits.

Ferriday snorted, "Paid for by Jim Dyckman's money."

"What do you mean—Jim Dyckman's money?"

"Oh, when I saw how idiotic he was over you, and how slow you were in landing him, and when I realized that the Hyperfilm Company was going to slide your pictures out with no special advertising, I went to him and tried to get him into the business."

"You had a nerve!"

"Praise from Lady Hubert!"

"Whoever she is! Well, did he bite?"

"Yes and no. He's not such a fool as he looks in your company. He has a hard head for business; he wouldn't invest a cent."

"I thought you said—"

"But he has a soft head for you. He said he wouldn't invest a cent in the firm, but he'd donate all I could use for you. It was to be a little secret present. He told me you refused to accept presents from him. Did you?"

Kedzie blushed before his cynic understanding.

He laughed: "You're all right. You know the game, but you've got to quicken your speed. You're taking too much footage in getting to the climax."

Kedzie was still incandescent with the new information: "And Jim Dyckman paid for my advertising?"

"On condition that his name was kept out of it. That's why you're famous. You couldn't have got your face in a paper if you had been fifty times as pretty if he hadn't swamped the papers with money. And he would never have thought of it if I hadn't gone after him. So you'd better waste a little politeness on me or your first flare will be your last."

Kedzie acknowledged his conquest, bowed her head, and pouted up at him with such exquisite impudence that he groaned:

"I don't know whether I ought to kiss you or kill you."

"Take your choice, my master," Kedzie cooed.

He snarled at her: "I guess the news I bring will do for you. There was a fire in the studio last night. You didn't know of it?"

Kedzie, dumbly aghast, shook her head.

"If you'd read any part of the newspapers except your own press stuff you'd have seen that there was a war in Europe yesterday and a fire in New York last night. I was there trying to save what I could. I got a few blisters and not much else. Most of your unfinished work is finished—gone up in smoke."

"You don't mean that my beautiful, wonderful films are destroyed?"

He nodded—then caught her as her knees gave way. He felt a stab of pity for her as he dragged her to her *chaise longue* and let her fall there. She was dazed with the shock.

She had been indifferent to the destruction of fortresses and cathedrals—even of Rheims, with its titanic granite lace. She had read, or might have read, of the air-

ship that dropped a bomb through the great fresco in Venice where Tiepolo revealed his unequaled mastery of aerial perspective, taking the eye up through the dome and the human witnesses, cloud by cloud, past the hierarchies of angels, past Christ and the Mother of God, on up to Jehovah himself, bending down from infinite heights. The eternal loss of this picture meant nothing to her. But the destruction of her own recorded smiles and tears and the pretty twistings and turnings of her young body—that was cataclysm.

She was like everybody else, in that no multiplication of other people's torments could be so vivid as the catching of her own thumb in a door. Kedzie was too crushed to weep. This little personal Pompeii brought to the dust all the palaces and turrets of her hope upon her head. She whispered to Ferriday:

"What are you going to do? Must you make them over again?"

He shook his head. "The Hyperfilm Company will probably shut up shop now."

"And let my pictures die?"

He nodded.

She beckoned him close and clung to him, babbling: "What will become of me? Oh, my poor pictures! My pretty pictures! The company owes me a week's salary. And I had counted on the money. What's to become of me?"

Ferriday resented her eternal use of him for her own advantages. "Why do you appeal to me? Where's your friend Dyckman?"

"I was to see him this evening—dine with him."

"Well, he can build you ten new studios and not feel it. Better ask him to set you up in business."

Kedzie revolted at this, but she had no answer. Ferriday saw the papers folded open at the society pages. He stared at them, at her, then sniffed:

"So that's your new ambition!"

"What?"

"'In the Social World!' You want to get in with that gang, eh? Has Dyckman asked you to marry him?"

"Of course not."

"Well, if he does, don't ever let him take you into his own set."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just to warn you. Those social worldlings wouldn't stand for you, Anita darling. You can make monkeys of us poor men. But those queens will make a little scared worm out of you and step on you. And they won't stop smiling for one minute."

"Is that so?" Kedzie snarled. There it was again.

The telephone rang. Kedzie answered it. The hall-boy timidly announced:

"Mistoo Dyckman is down year askin' kin he see you. Kin he?"

"Send him up, please," said Kedzie. Then she turned to Ferriday. "He's here—at this hour! I wonder why."

"I'd better slope."

"Do you mind?"

"Not in the least. I'll go up a flight of stairs and take the elevator after His Majesty has finished with it. Good-by. Get busy!"

He slid out, and Kedzie scurried about her primping. The bell rang. She sent her maid to the door. Dyckman came in. She let him wait awhile—then went to him with an elegiac manner.

She accepted his salute on a martyr-white brow. He said:

"I read about the fire. I was scared to death for you till I learned that all the people were safe. I motored up to see the ruins. Some ruins! Like to see 'em?"

"I don't think I could stand the sight of them. They're my ruins, too."

"How so?"

"Because the company won't rebuild or go on, and most of my pictures were destroyed."

"Your pretty, beautiful, gorgeous pictures gone! Oh, God help us! That's too terrible to believe."

She sighed, "It's true."

"Why, I'd rather lose the Metropolitan Art Gallery than your films. Can't they be made over?"

"They could, but who's to stand the expense?"

"I will, if you'll let me."

"Mr. Dyckman!"

"I thought we'd agreed that my name was Jim."

"Jim! You would do that for me!"

"Why not?"

"But why so?"

"Because—why, simply—er—it's the most natural thing in the world, seeing that— Well, you're not sitting there pretending that you don't know I love you, are you?"

"Oh dear, oh dear! It's too wonderful to believe, you angel!"

And then for the first time she flung her arms about his neck and kissed him and hugged him, knelt on his lap and clasped him fiercely.

He felt as if a simoom of rapture had struck him, and when she told him a dozen times that she loved him he could think of nothing to say but, "Say, this is great!"

She forgave him the banality this time. When she had calmed herself a little she said:

"But it would mean a frightful lot of money."

"Whatever it costs, it's cheap—considering this." He indicated her arm about his neck. "I wouldn't let the world be robbed of the pictures of you, Anita, not for any money." He told her to tell Ferriday to make the arrangements and send the estimates to him. And he said, "I won't ask you to quit being photographed, even when we are married."

"When we are married?" Kedzie parroted.

"Of course! That's where we're bound for, isn't it? Where else could we pull up—that is, of course, assuming that you'll do me the honor of anchoring a great artist like you up to a big dub like me. Will you?"

"Why—why—I'd like to think it over; this is so sudden."

"Of course, you'd better think it over, you poor angel!"

Kedzie could not think what else to say or even what to think. The word "marriage" reminded her that she had what the ineffable Bunker Bean would have called "a little old last year's husband" lying around in the garret of her past.

She went almost blind with rage at that beast of a Gilfoyle who had dragged her away and married her while she was not thinking. He must have hypnotized her or drugged her. If only she could quietly murder him! But she didn't even know where he was.

CHAPTER XXI

THE investigations of Messrs. Hodshon & Hindley in the life of Zada and Cheever prospered exceedingly. In blissless ignorance of it, Zada had been inspired to set a firm of sleuths on Charity's trail. She wanted to be able to convince Cheever that Charity was intrigued with Dyckman. The operators who kept Mrs. Charity Coe Cheever under espionage had the most stupid things to report to Zada.

To Zada's disgust, Mrs. Cheever never called upon Jim Dyckman, and he never called on her. Zada accused the bureau of cheating her, and finally put another agency to shadowing Jim Dyckman. According to the reports she had, his neglect of Mrs. Cheever was perfectly explained. He was a mere satellite of a moving-picture actress, a new-comer named Anita Adair.

The detectives reported that such gossip as they could pick up about the studio indicated that Dyckman was putting money into the firm on her account.

"A movie angel!" sneered Zada. She had wasted a hundred dollars on him to find this out, and two hundred and fifty on Mrs. Cheever to find out that she was intensely respectable. That was bitter news to Zada. She canceled her business with her detective agency. And they called in the shadows that haunted Charity's life.

The detectives on Zada's trail, however, had more rewarding material to work with—although they found unexpected difficulties, they said, in getting the dictagraph installed in her apartment. They did not wish to ruin the whole enterprise by too great haste—especially as

they were receiving eight dollars a day and liberal expenses per man.

At last, however, Hodshon sent word to Mrs. Cheever that the dictagraph was installed and working to a T, and she could listen-in whenever she was ready.

Charity was terrified utterly now. New scales were to be shaken from her eyes at the new tree of knowledge. She was to hear her man talking to his leman.

She had almost an epilepsy of terror, but she could not resist the importunate opportunity.

She selected from her veils a heavy crêpe that she had worn during a period of mourning for one of her husband's relatives. It seemed appropriate now, for she was going into mourning for her own husband, living, yet about to die to her.

She left the house alone after dark and walked along Fifth Avenue till she found a taxicab. She gave the street number Hodshon had given her and stepped in. She kept an eye on the lighted clock and in the dark sorted out the exact change and a tip, adding dimes as they were recorded on the meter. She did not want to have to pause for change, and she did not wish to make herself conspicuous by an extravagant tip.

As the taxicab slid along the Avenue Charity wondered if any of the passengers in other cabs could have an errand so gruesome as hers. She was tortured by fantastic imaginings of what she might hear. She wondered how a man would talk to such a person as Zada, and how she would answer. She imagined the most dreadful things she could.

The taxicab surprised her by stopping suddenly before a brown-fronted residence adjoining an apartment-house of (more or less literally) meretricious ornateness. She stepped out, paid her fare, and turned, to find Mr. Hodshon at her elbow. He had been waiting for her. He recognized her by her melodramatic veil. He gave her needed help up a high stoop and opened the door with a key.

She found herself in a shabby, smelly hall where no one else was.

He motioned her up the stairway, and she climbed with timidity. At each level there were name-plates over the electric buttons. The very labels seemed illicit. Hodshon motioned her up and up for four flights.

Then he opened a door and stepped back to let her enter a room unfurnished except for a few chairs and a table. Two men were in the room, and they were laughing with uproar. One of them had a telephone-receiver clamped to his ear, and he was making shorthand notes, explaining to his companion what he heard.

They turned in surprise at Hodshon's entrance and rose to greet Charity with the homage due so great a client.

Charity could hardly bespeak them civilly. They took her curtness for snobbery, but it was not. It swept over her that these people were laughing over her most sacred tragedy.

She advanced on the operator and put out her hand for the headpiece he wore. He took it off and rubbed it with his handkerchief, and told her that she must remove her hat and veil.

She came out startlingly white and brilliant from the black. She put the elastic clamp over her head and set the receiver to her ear. Instantly she was assailed by dreadful noises, a jangle of inarticulate sounds like the barking of two dogs.

"I can't hear a word," she protested.

"They're talkin' too loud," said the operator. "The only way to beat the dictagraph is to cut the wire or yell."

"Are they quarreling, then?" Charity asked, almost with pleasure.

"Yes, ma'am. But it's the lady and her maid. They been havin' a terrible scrap about marketin'. He—Mr. Cheever—ain't there yet. They're expectin' him, though."

Charity felt that she had plumbed the depths of degrada-

tion in listening to a quarrel between such a creature and her maid. What must it be to be the maid of such a creature! She was about to snatch away the earpiece when she heard the noise of a door opening. She looked toward the entrance of the room she was in, but the door that opened was in the other room in the other building.

The voices of Zada and her maid stopped jangling, and she heard the most familiar of all voices asking:

"What's the row to-day?"

There was an extra metal in the timbre and it had the effect of an old phonographic record, but there was no questioning whose voice it was.

Zada's voice became audibly low in answer.

"She is such a fool she drives me crazy."

A sullen, servile voice answered: "It ain't me's the fool, and as for crazy—her wantin' me to bring home what they ain't in no market. How 'm I goin' to git what ain't to be got, I asts you. This here war is stoppin' ev'y kind of food."

Cheever's answer was characteristic. He didn't believe in servants' rights.

"Get out. If you're impudent again I'll throw you out, and your baggage after you."

"Yassar," was the soft answer.

There was the sound of shuffling feet and a softly closed door. Then Zada's voice, very mellow:

"I thought you'd never come, dearie."

"Awfully busy to-day, honey."

"You took dinner with her, of course."

"No. It was a big day on the Street, and there was so much to do at the office that I dined down-town at the Bankers' Club with several men and then went back to the office. I ought to be there all night, but I couldn't keep away from you any longer."

There were mysterious quirks of sound that meant kisses and sighs and tender inarticulations. There were cooing tones which the dictagraph repeated with hideous fidelity.

Zada asked, "Did he have hard daydie old office-ums?"

And he answered, with infatuated imbecility, "Yes, he diddums, but worst was lonelying for his Zadalums."

"Did Peterkin miss his Zadalums truly—truly?"

The inveterate idioms of wooers took on in Charity's ear a grotesque obscenity, a sacrilegious burlesque of words as holy to her as prayer or the sacred dialect of priests. When Zada murmured, "Kissings! kissings!" Charity screamed: "Stop it, you beasts! You beasts!"

Then she clapped her hand over her lips, expecting to hear their panic at her outcry. But they were as oblivious of her pain or her rage as if an interplanetary space divided them. They went on with the murmur and susurrus of their communion, while Charity looked askance at the three men. They could not hear, but could imagine, and they stared at her doltishly.

"Leave the room! Go away!" she groaned.

They slipped out through the door and left her to her shame.

In the porches of her ear the hateful courtship purled on with its tender third-personal terms and its amorous diminutives, suffixed ridiculously.

"Zada was af'aid her booful Peterkin had forgotten her and gone to the big old house."

"Without coming home first?"

"Home! that's the wordie I want. This is his homie, isn't it, Peterkin?"

"Yessy."

"He doesn't love old villain who keeps us apart?"

"Nonie, nonie."

"Never did, did he?"

"Never."

"Only married her, didn't he?"

"That's allie."

"Zada is only really wifie?"

"Only onlykins."

Charity listened with a greed of self-torment like a

fanatic penitent. The chatter of the two had none of the indecency she had expected, and that made it the more intolerably indecent.

She saw that Cheever's affair with Zada had settled down to a state of comfort, of halcyon delight.

It had taken on domestication. He was at home with her and an alien in Charity's home. He told the woman his business affairs and little office jokes. He laughed with a purity of cheer that he had long lost in his legal establishment. He used many of the love-words that he had once used to Charity, and her heart was wrung with the mockery of it.

Charity listened helplessly. She was as one manacled or paralyzed and submitted to such a torture as she had never endured. She harkened in vain for some hopeful note of uncongeniality, some reassurance for her love or at least her vanity, some certainty that her husband, her first possessor, had given her some emotion that he could never give another. But he was repeating to Zada the very phrases of his honeymoon, repeating them with all the fervor of a good actor playing Romeo for the hundredth time with his new leading lady. Indeed, he seemed to find in Zada a response and a unity that he had never found in Charity's society. Her intelligence was cruelly goaded to the realization that she had never been quite the woman for Cheever.

She had known that he had not been the full complement of her own soul. They had disagreed fiercely on hundreds of topics. He had been chilled by many of her ardors, as many of his interests had bored her. She had supposed it to be an inevitable inability of a man and a woman to regard the world through the same eyes. She had let him go his way and had gone her own. And now it seemed that he had in his wanderings found some one who mated him exactly. The butterfly had liked the rose, but had fluttered away; when it found the orchid it closed its wings and rested content.

It was a frightful revelation to Charity, for it meant that Cheever had been merely flirting with her. She had caught his eye as a girl in a strange port captivates a sailor. He had haunted her window with serenades. Finding her to be what we call "a good girl," he had called upon her father and mother that he might talk to her longer. And then he had gone to church with her and married her that he might get rid of her father and mother and her own scruples. And so he had made her his utterly, and after a few days and nights had sailed away. He had come back to her now and then as a sailor does.

Meanwhile in another port he had found what we call "a bad woman." There had been no need to serenade her out into the streets. They were her shop. No parents had guarded her hours; no priest was intermediary to her possession. But once within her lair he had found himself where he had always wanted to be, and she had found herself with the man she had been hunting. She closed her window, drove her frequenters, old and new, from the door; and he regretted that he had given pledges to that other woman.

It was a pitiful state of affairs, no less pitiful for being old and ugly and innumerously commonplace. It meant that Cheever under the white cloak of matrimony had despoiled Charity of her innocence, and under the red domino of intrigue had restored to Zada hers.

If Charity, sitting like a recording angel, invisible but hearing everything, had found in the communion of Zada and Cheever only the fervor of an amour, she could have felt that Cheever was merely a libertine who loved his wife and his home but loved to rove as well. She had, however, ghastly evidence that Cheever was only now the rake reformed; his marriage had been merely one of his escapades; he had settled down now to monogamy with Zada, and she was his wife in all but style and title.

There was more of Darby and Joan than of Elvira and

Don Juan in their conversation. He told Zada with pride that he had not had a drink all day, though he had needed alco-help and the other men had ridiculed him. She told him that she had not had a drink for a week and only one cigarette since her lonely dinner. They were in a state of mutual reformation!

Where, then, was the sacrament of marriage? Which of the women held the chalice now?

It was enforced on Charity that it was she and not Zada who had been the inspirer and the victim of Cheever's flitting appetite. It was Zada and not she who had won him to the calm, the dignity, the sincerity, the purity that make marriage marriage. It was a hard lesson for Charity, and she did not know what she ought to do with her costly knowledge. She could only listen.

When Zada complained that she had had a dreadful day of blues Cheever made jokes for her as for a child, and she laughed like the child she was. For her amusement he even went to a piano and played, with blundering three-chord accompaniment, a song or two. He played jokes on the keyboard. He revealed none of the self-consciousness that he manifested before Charity when he exploited his little bag of parlor tricks.

Charity's mood had changed from horror to eager curiosity, and thence to cold despair, to cold resentment. It went on to cold intelligence and a belief that her life with Cheever was over. Their marriage was a proved failure, and any further experiments with its intimacies would be unspeakably vile. Or so she thought.

She had consented to this dictagraphic inspection of her husband's intrigue merely to confirm or refute gossip. She had had more than evidence enough to satisfy her. Her first reaction to it was a primitive lust for revenge.

Once or twice she blazed with such anger that she rose to tear the wire loose from the wall and end the torment. But her curiosity restrained her. She set the earpiece to her ear again.

At length she formed her resolution to act. She called out, "Mr. Hodshon, come here!"

He came in and found her a pillar of rage.

"I've heard enough. I'll do what I refused before. I'll go with you and break in."

Hodshon was dazed. He was not ready to act. She had refused his plan to break in according to the classic standards. He had let the plan lapse and accepted Mrs. Cheever as a poor rich wretch whom he had contracted to provide with a certain form of morbid entertainment. He could do nothing now but stammer:

"Well—well—is that so? Do you really? You know you didn't— O' course— Well, let's see now. You know we ain't prepared. I told you we had to have a c'rob'rating witness. It wouldn't be legal if we were to— Still, they probably would accept you as witness and us as corroboration, but you wouldn't want to go on the stand and tell what you found—not a nice refined lady like you are. The witness-stand is no place for a lady, anyway.

"The thing is if you could get some gentleman friend to go with you and you two break in. Then you'd both be amateurs, kind of. You see? Do you know any gentleman who might be willing to do that for you? The best of friends get very shy when you suggest such a job. But if you know anybody who would be interested and wanted to help you— Do you?"

Only two names came to Charity's searching mind—Jim Dyckman's impossible name and one that was so sublimely unfit that she laughed as she uttered it.

"There's the Reverend Doctor Mosely."

Hodshon tried to laugh.

"I was reading head-lines of a sermon of his. He's down on divorce."

"That's why he'd be the ideal witness," said Charity.

"But would he come?"

"Of course not," she laughed. "There's no use of

carrying this further. I've had all I can stand to-night. Let me go."

As usual with people who have had all they can stand, Charity wanted some more. She glanced at the receiver, curious as to what winged words had flown unattended during her parley with Hodshon.

She put the receiver to her ear and fell back. Again she was greeted with clamor. They were quarreling ferociously.

That might mean either of two things: there are the quarrels that enemies maintain, and those that devoted lovers wage. The latter sort are perhaps the bitterer, the less polite. Charity could not learn what had started the wrangle between those two.

Slowly it died away. Zada's cries turned to sobs, and her tirade to sobs.

"You don't love me. Go back to her. You love her still."

"No, I don't, honey. I just don't want her name brought into our conversation. It doesn't seem decent, somehow. It's like bringing her in here to listen to our quarrels. I'm sorry I hurt you. I'm trying not to, but you're so peculiarly hard to keep peace with lately. What's the reason, darling?"

Charity was smitten with a fear more terrible than any yet. She heard its confirmation. Zada whispered:

"Can't you guess?"

"No, I can't."

"Stupid!" Zada murmured. "You poor, stupid boy."

Charity heard nothing for a long moment—then a gasp.

"Zada!"

She greeted his alarm with a chuckle and a flurry of proud laughter. He bombarded her with questions:

"Why didn't you tell me? How long? What will you do? How could you?—you're no fool."

Her answers were jumbled with his questions—his voice terrified, hers victorious.

"I've kept it a secret for months, because I was afraid of you. It's my right. It's too late to do anything now. And now we'll see whether you love me or not—and how much, if any."

There was again silence. Charity could hardly tolerate the suspense. Both she and Zada were hanging breathlessly on Cheever's answer.

He did not speak for so long that Zada gave up. "You don't love me, then? I'd better kill myself, I suppose. It's the only solution now. And I'm willing, since you don't love me enough."

"No, no—yes, I do. I adore you—more than ever. But it's such a strange ambition for you; and, God! what a difference it makes, what a difference!"

That was what Charity thought. For once she agreed with Cheever, echoed his words and his dismay and stood equally stunned before the new riddle. It was a perfect riddle now, for there was no end to the answers, and every one of them was wrong.

CHAPTER XXII

CHARITY let the receiver fall. She had had enough. She sank into a chair and would have slipped to the floor, but her swimming eyes made out the blurred face of Hodshon, terrified at her pallor.

If she fainted he would resuscitate her. She could not add that to her other ignominies. She clenched herself like one great fist of resolution till the swoon was frustrated. She sat still for a while—then rose, put on her hat, swathed her face in the veil, and went down the flights of stairs and out into the cool, dark street.

She had forgotten that she had dismissed the taxicab. Fortunately another was lurking in the lee of the apartment-house. Hodshon summoned it and would have ridden home with her, but she forbade him. She passed on the way the church of Doctor Mosely and his house adjoining. She was tempted to stop, but she was too weary for more talk.

She slept exceedingly well that night, so well that when she woke she regretted that she had not slept on out of the world. She fell asleep again, but was trampled by a nightmare. She woke trying to scream. Her eyes, opening, found her beautiful room about her and the dream dangers vanished.

But the horrors of her waking hours of yesterday had not vanished. They were waiting for her. She could not end them by the closing of her eyes. In the cool, clear light of day she saw still more problems than before —problems crying for decisions and contradicting each other with a hopeless conflict of moralities. To move

in any direction was to commit ugly deeds; to move in no direction was to commit the ugliest of all.

She rang for her coffee, and she could hardly sit up to it. Her maid cried out at her age-worn look, and begged her to see a doctor.

"I'm going to as soon as I'm strong enough," said Charity Coe. But she meant the Reverend Doctor Mosely. She thought that she could persuade even him that surgery was necessary upon that marriage. At any rate, she determined to force a decision from him. She telephoned the unsuspecting old darling, and he readily consented to see her. She spent an hour or two going over her Bible and concordance. They gave her little comfort in her plight.

When finally she dragged herself from her home to Doctor Mosely's his butler ushered her at once into the study. Doctor Mosely welcomed her both as a grown-up child and as an eminent dealer in good deeds.

She went right at her business. "Doctor Mosely, I loathe myself for adding to the burdens your parish puts upon your dear shoulders but you're responsible for my present dilemma."

"My dear child, you don't tell me! Then you must let me help you out of it. But first tell me—what I'm responsible for."

"You married me to Peter Cheever."

"Why, yes, I believe I did. I marry so many dear girls. Yes, I remember your wedding perfectly. A very pretty occasion, and you looked extremely well. So did the bridegroom. I was quite proud of joining two such—such—"

"Please unjoin us."

"Great Heavens, my child! What are you saying?"

"I am asking you to untie the knot you tied."

The old man stared at her, took his glasses off, rubbed them, put them on, and peered into her face to make sure of her. Then he said:

"If that were in my power—and you know perfectly well that it is not—it would be a violation of all that I hold sacred in matrimony."

"Just what do you hold sacred, Doctor Mosely?"

"Dear, dear, this will never do. Really, I don't wish to take advantage of my cloth, but, really, you know, Charity, you have been taught better than to snap at the clergy like that."

"Forgive me; I'm excited, not irreverent. But—well, you don't believe in divorce, do you?"

"I have stated so with all the power of my poor eloquence."

"Do you believe that the seventh commandment is the least important of the lot?"

"Certainly not!"

"If a man breaks any commandment he ought to do what he can to remedy the evil?"

"Yes."

"Then if a man violates the seventh, why shouldn't he be compelled to make restitution, too?"

"What restitution could he make?"

"Not much. He has taken from the girl he marries her name, her innocence, her youth—he can restore only one thing—her freedom."

"That is not for him to restore. 'What, therefore, God hath joined, let not man put asunder.'"

The old man grew majestic when he thundered the sonorities of Holy Writ. Charity was cowed, but she made a craven protest:

"But who is to say what God hath joined?"

"The marriage sacraments administered by the ordained clergy established that. There is every warrant for clergymen to perform marriages; no Christian clergyman pretends to undo them."

"You believe that marriage is an indissoluble sacrament, then?"

"Indeed I do."

"Who made my marriage a sacrament?"

"I did, as the agent of God."

"And the minute you pronounce a couple married they are registered in heaven, and God completes the union?"

"You may put it as you please; the truth is divine."

"In other words, a man like you can pronounce two people man and wife, but once the words have escaped his lips nothing can ever correct the mistake."

"There are certain conditions which annul a marriage, but once it is genuinely ratified on earth it is ratified in heaven."

"In heaven, where, as the New Testament says in several places, married people do not live together? The woman who had seven husbands on earth, you know, didn't have any at all in heaven."

"So Christ answered the Sadducee who tempted him with questions."

"Marriage is strictly a matter of the earth, earthy, then?"

"Nothing is strictly that, my child. But what in the name of either earth or heaven has led you to come over here and break into my morning's work with such a fusillade of childish questions? You know a child can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer. Also, a child can ask questions which a wise man can answer to another wise man but not to a child. You talk like an excited, an unreasoning girl. I am surprised to hear you ridiculing the institution of Christian marriage, but your ridicule does not prove it to be ridiculous."

"Oh, it's not ridiculous to me, Doctor Mosely; and I'm not ridiculing it. I am horribly afraid of what it has done to me and will do to me."

"Explain that, my dear."

She did explain with all bluntness: "My husband openly lives with a mistress. He prefers her to me."

The old man was stunned. He faltered: "Dear me!

That is most reprehensible—most! He should be subjected to discipline."

"Whose? He isn't a member of your church. And how can you discipline such a man—especially as you don't believe in divorce?"

"Have you tried to win him back to the path of duty, to waken him to a realizing sense of his obliquity?"

"Often and long. It can't be done, for he loves the other woman."

"Don't use the beautiful word *love* for such a debasing impulse."

"But I know he loves her!"

"How could you know?"

"I heard him tell her."

"You heard him! Do you ask me to believe that he told her that in your presence?"

"I heard him on the dictagraph."

"You have been collecting evidence for divorce, then?"

"No, I was collecting it to assure myself that the gossip I had heard was false—and to submit to you."

"But why to me?"

"When I first learned of this hideous situation my first impulse was to rush to the courts. I went to church instead. I heard your sermon. It stopped me from seeing a lawyer."

"I am glad my poor words have served some useful end."

"But have they?"

"If I have prevented one divorce I have not lived in vain."

"You don't think I have a right to ask for one?"

"Absolutely and most emphatically not."

"In spite of anything he may do?"

"Anything! He will come back to you, Charity. Possess your soul in patience. It may be years, but keep the light burning and he will return."

"In what condition?"

"My child, you shock me! You've been reading the horrible literature that gets printed under the guise of science."

"I must wait, then?"

"Yes. If you wish to separate from him for a time, your absence might waken him to a realizing sense. There are no children, I believe."

"None, yet."

"Yet? Oh, then—"

"If there were, would it make a difference?"

"Of course! an infinite difference!"

"You think a man and woman ought to let their child keep them together in any event?"

"Need I say it? What greater bond of union could there be? Is it not God's own seal and blessing on the wedlock, rendering it, so to speak, even more indissoluble? You blush, my child. Is it true, then, that—"

"A child is expected."

"Ah, my dear girl! How that proves what I have maintained! The birth of the little one will bring the errant father to his senses. The tiny hands will unite its parents as if they were the hands of a priest drawing them together. That child is the divine messenger confirming the sacrament."

"You believe that?"

"Utterly. Oh, I am glad. Motherhood is the crowning triumph; it hallows any woman howsoever lowly or wicked. And you are neither, Charity. I know you to be good and busy in good works. But were you never so evil, this heavenly privilege would make of you a very vessel of sanctity."

Charity turned pale as she sprung the trap. "The child is expected—not by me, but by the other woman."

Doctor Mosely's beatitude turned to a sick disgust. Red and white streaked his face. His first definite reaction was wrath at the trick that had been played upon him.

"Mrs. Cheever! This is unworthy of you! You distress me! Really!"

"I was a little distressed myself. What am I to do?"

"I will not believe what you say."

"I heard her confess it—boast of it. She agrees with you that the tiny hands will bring her and the father together and confirm the sacrament."

"It can't be. It must not be!"

"You don't advocate that form of birth-control? They are arresting people who preach prevention of conception. You are not so modern as that."

"Hush!"

"What am I to do? You advise me to possess my soul in patience for years. But the child won't wait that long. Doesn't the situation alter your opinion of divorce?"

"No!"

"But if I don't divorce Mr. Cheever and let him marry her the child will have no father—legally."

"The responsibility is his, not yours."

"You don't believe in infant damnation, do you? At least not on earth, do you?"

"I cannot control the evil impulses of others. The doctrines of the Church cannot be modified for the convenience of every sinner."

"You advise against divorce, then?"

"I am unalterably opposed to it."

"What is your solution, then, of this situation?"

"I shall have to think it over—and pray. Please go. You have staggered me."

"When you have thought it over will you give me the help of your advice?"

"Certainly."

"Then shall I wait till I hear from you?"

"If you will."

"Good-by, Doctor Mosely."

"Good-by, Mrs.—Charity—my child!"

He pressed her long hand in his old palms. He was

trembling. He was like a priest at bay before the altar while the arrows of the infidel rain upon him. These arrows were soft as rain and keen as silk. He was more afraid of them than if they had been tipped with flint or steel.

Charity left the parsonage no wiser than she entered it. She had accomplished nothing further than to ruin Doctor Mosely's excellent start on an optimistic discourse in the prevailing fashion of the enormously popular "Pollyanna" stories: it was to be a "glad" sermon, an inexorably glad sermon. But poor Doctor Mosely could not preach it now in the face of this ugly fact.

Charity went home with her miserable triumph, which only emphasized her defeat.

She found at home a mass of details pressing for immediate action if the big moving-picture project were not to lapse into inanity. The mere toil of such a task ought to have been welcomed, at least as a diversion. But her heart was as if dead in her.

She wondered how Jim Dyckman was progressing with his portion of the task. He had not reported to her. She wondered why.

She decided to telephone him. She put out her hand, but did not lift the receiver from the hook. She began to muse upon Jim Dyckman. She began to think strange thoughts of him. If she had married him she might not have failed so wretchedly to find happiness. Of course, she might have failed more wretchedly and more speedily, but the wayfarer who chooses one of two crossroads and meets a wolf upon it does not believe that a lion was waiting on the other.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHARITY pondered her whole history with Jim Dyckman, from their childhood flirtations on. He had had other flings, and she had flung herself into Peter Cheever's arms. Peter Cheever had flung her out again. Jim Dyckman had opened his arms again.

He had told her that she was wasting herself. He had offered her love and devotion. She had struck his hands away and rebuked him fiercely. A little later she had felt a pang of jealousy because he looked at that little Greek dancer so interestedly. She had tried to atone for this appalling thought by interesting herself in the little dancer's welfare and hunting a position for her with the moving-picture company. She had told Jim Dyckman to look for the girl in the studio and find how she was getting along. He had never reported on that, either. Charity smiled bitterly.

Last night it had come over her that her love for Peter Cheever was dead. Was love itself, then, dead for her? or was her heart already busy down there in the dark of her bosom, busy like a seed germinating some new lily or fennel to thrust up into the daylight?

The sublime and the ridiculous are as close together as the opposite sides of a sheet of cloth. The sublime is the obverse of the tapestry with the figures heroic, saintly or sensuous, in battle or temple or bower, in conquest, love, martyrdom, adoration. The reverse of the tapestry is a matter of knots and tufts, broken patterns, ludicrous accidents of contour. The same threads make up both sides.

On one side of Charity's tapestry she saw herself as a pitiful figure, a neglected wife returned from errands of mercy to find her husband enamoured of a wanton. She spurned the proffered heart of a great knight while her own heart bled openly in her breast.

On the other side she saw the same red threads that crimsoned her heart running across the arras to and from the heart of Jim Dyckman. It was the red thread of life and love, blood-color—blood-maker, blood-spiller, heart-quickener, heart-sickener, the red thread of romance, of motherhood and of lust, birth and murder, family and bawdry.

In the tapestry her heart was entire, her eyes upon her faithless husband. On the other side her eyes faced the other knight; her heartstrings ran out to his. She laughed harshly at the vision. Her laugh ended in a fierce contempt of herself and of every body and thing else in the world.

She was too weak to fight the law and the Church and the public in order to divorce her husband. Would it be weakness or strength to sit at home in the ashes and deny herself to life and love? She could always go to Jim Dyckman and take him as her cavalier. But then she would become one of those heartbroken, leash-broken women who are the Mænads of society, more or less circumspect and shy, but none the less lawless. But wherein were they better than the Zadas?

Charity was wrung with a nausea of love in all its activities; she forswore them. Yet she was human. She was begotten and conceived in the flesh of lovers. She was made for love and its immemorial usages. How could she expect to destroy her own primeval impulse just because one treacherous man had enjoyed her awhile and passed on to his next affair?

There was no child of hers to grow up and replace her in the eternal armies of love and compel her aside among the veteran women who have been mustered out. She

was in a sense already widowed of her husband. Certainly she would never love Cheever again or receive him into her arms. He belonged to the mother of his child. Let that woman step aside into the benches of the spectators, those who have served their purpose and must become wet-nurses, child-dryers, infant-teachers, perambulator-motors, question-answerers, nose-blowers, mischief-punishers, cradleside-bards.

Charity laughed derisively at the vision of Zada as a mother. The Madonna pose had fascinated this Magdalen, but she would find that mothers have many, many other things to do for their infants than to sit for portraits and give them picturesque nourishment—many, many other things. If Zada's child inherited its father's and mother's wantonness, laziness, wickedness, and violence of temper, there was going to be a lively nursery in that apartment.

Zada had so wanted a baby as a reward of love that she was willing to snatch it out of the vast waiting-room without pausing for a license. She would find that she had bought punishment at a high price. The poor baby was in for a hard life, but it would give its parents one in exchange.

Charity was appalled at this unknown harshness of her soul; it sneered at all things once held beautiful and sacred. Her soul was like a big cathedral broken into by a pagan mob that ran about smashing images, defiling fonts, burlesquing all the solemn rituals. Her quiet mind was full of sunburnt nymphs and goatish fauns with shaggy fetlocks. She saw the world as a Brocken and all the Sabbath there was was a Sabbath orgy of despicably brutish fiends.

She tried to run away. She went to her piano; her fingers would play no dirges; they grew flippant, profane in rhythm. She could think of no tunes but dances—andantes turned scherzi, the Handelian largo became a Castilian tango. She found herself playing a something

strange—she realized that it was a lullaby! She fled from the piano.

She went to her books for nepenthe. There were romances in French, Italian, German, English, and American, new books, old books, all repeating the same stencils of passion in different colors. She could have spat at them and their silly ardors over the same old banality: I love him; he loves me—beatitude! I love him; he loves her—tragedy!

The novelists were like stupid children parroting the ancient monotony—*amo, amas, amat; amamus, amatis, amant; amo, amas, amat*—away with such primer stuff! She had learned the grammar of love and was graduated from the school-books. She was a postgraduate of love and wedlock. She had had enough of them—too much; she would read no more of love, dwell no more upon it; she would forget it.

She wanted some antiseptic book, something frigid, intellectual, ascetic. At last she thought she had it. On her shelf she found an uncut volume, a present from some one who had never read it, but had bought it because it cost several dollars and would serve as a gift.

It was Gardner's biography of Saint Catherine of Siena, "a study in the religion, literature, and history of the fourteenth century of Italy." That sounded heartless enough. The frontispiece portrait of the wan, meager, despondent saint promised freedom from romantic balderdash.

Charity found a chair by a window and began to read. The preface announced the book to be "history centered in the work and personality of one of the most wonderful women that ever lived." This was the medicine Charity wanted—the story of a woman who had been wonderful without love or marriage.

There followed a description of the evil times and the wicked town in which Caterina Benincasa was born—as long ago as 1347. A pestilence swept away four-fifths

of the populace. One man told how he had buried five of his sons in one trench. People said that the end of the world had come.

The word *trench*, the perishing of the people and the apparent end of the world, gave the story a modern sound. It might concern the murderous years of 1914–16.

Catherine was religious, as little girls are apt to be. She even wanted to enter a monastery in the disguise of a boy. Later her sister persuaded her to dye her hair and dress fashionably. Charity began to fear for her saint, but was reassured to find that already at sixteen she was a nun and had commenced that "life of almost incredible austerity," freeing herself from all dependence on food and sleep and resting on a bare board.

Charity read with envy how Catherine had devoted herself for three whole years to silence broken only by confessions. How good it would be not to talk to anybody about anything for years and years! How blissful to live a calm, gray life in a strait cell, doing no labor but the errands of mercy and of prayer!

Charity read on, wondering a little at Catherine's idea of God, and her morbid devotion to His blood as the essence of everything beautiful and holy. Charity could not put herself back into that Middle Age when the most concrete materialism was mingled inextricably with the most fantastic symbolism.

Suddenly she was startled to find that appalling temptations found even Catherine out even in her cloistral solitude. It frightened Charity to read such a passage as this:

> There came a time, towards the end of these three years, when these assaults and temptations became horrible and unbearable. Aerial men and women, with obscene words and still more obscene gestures, seemed to invade her little cell, sweeping round her like the souls of the damned in Dante's "Hell," inviting her simple and chaste soul to the banquet of lust. Their suggestions grew so hideous and persistent that she fled in terror from the cell that had become like a circle of the infernal regions, and took refuge in the church; but they pur-

sued her thither, though there their power seemed checked. And her Christ seemed far from her. At last she cried out, remembering the words in the vision: "I have chosen suffering for my consolation, and will gladly bear these and all other torments, in the name of the Saviour, for as long as shall please His Majesty." When she said this, immediately all that assemblage of demons departed in confusion, and a great light from above appeared that illumined all the room, and in the light the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, nailed to the Cross and stained with blood, as He was when by His own blood He entered into the holy place; and from the Cross He called the holy virgin, saying: "My daughter Catherine, seest thou how much I have suffered for thee? Let it not then be hard to thee to endure for Me."

This terrified Charity, and the further she read the less comfort she gained. Her matter-of-fact Manhattan mind could vaguely understand Saint Catherine's mystic nuptials with Christ; but that definite gold ring He placed on her finger, that diamond with four pearls around it, frustrated her comprehension.

When she read on and learned how Catherine's utter self-denial offended the other churchmen and churchwomen; how her confessions of sinful thought brought accusations of sinful deed; how the friars actually threw her out of a church at noon and kicked her as she lay senseless in the dust; how she was threatened with assassination and was turned from the doors of the people; and in what torment she died—from these strange events in the progress of a strange soul through a strange world Charity found no parallel to guide her life along.

For hours she read; but all that remained to her was the vision of that poor woman who could find no refuge from her flesh and from the demons that played evil rhapsodies upon the harp-strings of her nerves.

Charity closed the book and understood fear. She was now not so much sick of love as afraid of it. She was afraid of solitude, afraid of religion and of the good works that cause ridicule or resentment.

Darkness gathered about her with the closing of the

day. She dreaded the night and the day, people and the absence of people. She knew no woman she could take her anguish to for sympathy; it would provoke only rebuke or laughter. The Church had rebuffed her. There remained only men, and what could she hope from them? Even Jim Dyckman had not been a friend merely. He had told her that she wasted herself as well as him.

Beyond this night there were years of nights, years on years of days. She could not even be alone; for who was ever actually alone? Even in the hush and the gloom of the deepening twilight there were figures here, shadows that sighed, delicate insinuators. There were no satyrs or bassarids, but gentlemen in polo garb, in evening dress, in yachting flannels. There were moon-nights in Florida, electric floods on dancing-floors, this dim corner of this room with some one leaning on her chair, bending his head and whispering:

"Charity, it's Jim. I love you."

She rose and thrust aside the arms that were not there. She could not order him away, because he was not there. And yet he was there.

She was afraid that he still loved her and afraid that he did not. She was afraid that she had always loved him and that she never could. She was afraid that she would go to him or send for him, and afraid that she would be afraid to. She thrust away the phantom, but her palms pleaded against his departure. Softer than a whisper and noisier than a cry was her thought:

"I don't want to be alone. I am afraid to be alone."

CHAPTER XXIV

KEDZIE wanted to be a lady, and with the ladies stand—a tall tiara in her hair, a lorgnette in her hand.

She had succeeded dizzily, tremendously, in her cinema career. The timid thing that had watched the moving-picture director to see how he held his wineglass, and accepted his smile as a beam of sunshine breaking through the clouds about his godlike head, now found his gracefulness "actory," his intimacy impudent, and his association compromising. Ferriday's very picturesqueness and artistry convinced her now that he was not quite the gentleman.

Kedzie was beginning to imitate the upper dialect already. She who but a twelvemonth past was dividing people into "hicks" and "swells," and whose epithets were "reub" and "classy," was now a generation advanced.

Ferriday saw it and raged. One day in discussing the cast of a picture he mentioned the screen-pet Lorraine Melnotte as the man for the principal male rôle.

Kedzie sighed: "Oh, he is so hopelessly romantic, never quite the gentleman. In costume he gets by, but in evening clothes he always suggests the handsome waiter—don't you think?"

Ferriday roared, with disgust: "Good Lord, but you're growing. What is this thing I've invented? Are you a *Frankenstein?*"

Kedzie looked blank and sneered, "Are you implying that I have Yiddish blood in me?"

She wondered why he laughed, but she would not ask. Along many lines Kedzie did not know much, but in others she was uncannily acute.

Kedzie was gleaning all her ideas of gentlemanship from Jim Dyckman. She knew that he had lineage and heritage and equipage and all that sort of thing, and he must be great because he knew great people. His careless simplicity, artlessness, shyness, all the things that distressed her at first, were now accepted as the standards of conduct for everybody.

In life as in other arts, the best artists grow from the complex to the simple, the tortuous to the direct, from pose to poise, from tradition to truth, from artifice to reality. Kedzie was beginning to understand this and to ape what she could not do naturally.

Her comet-like scoot from obscurity to fame in the motion-picture sky had exhausted the excitement of that sky, and now she was ashamed of being a wage-earner, a mere actress, especially a movie actress.

If the studio had not caught fire and burned up so many thousands of yards of her portraiture she would have broken her contract without scruple. But the shock of the loss of her pretty images drove her back to the scene. The pity of so much thought, emotion, action, going up in smoke was too cruel to endure.

It was not necessary for Dyckman to pay the expenses of their repetition in celluloid, as he offered. The Hyperfilm Company rented another studio and began to remake the destroyed pictures. They were speedily renewed because the scenarios had been rescued and there was little of that appalling waste of time, money, and effort which has almost wrecked the whole industry. They did not photograph a thousand feet for every two hundred used.

Kedzie's first pictures had gone to the exchanges before the fire, and they were continuing their travels about the world while she was at work revamping the rest.

About this time the Hyperfilm managers decided to

move their factory to California, where the sempiternal sunlight insured better photography at far less expense. This meant that Kedzie must leave New York only partly conquered and must tear herself away from Jim Dyckman.

She broke down and cried when she told Dyckman of this, and for the first time his sympathies were stampeded on her account. He petted her, and she slid into his arms with a child-like ingratiation that made his heart swell with pity.

"What's the odds," he said, attempting consolation, "where you work, so long as you work?"

"But it would mean," she sobbed—"it would mean taking me away-ay from you-ou."

This tribute enraptured Dyckman incredibly. That he should mean so much to so wonderful a thing as she was was unbelievably flattering. He had dogged Charity's heels with meek and unrewarded loyalty until he had lost all pride. Kedzie's tears at the thought of leaving him woke it to life again.

"By golly, you sha'n't go, then!" he cried. "I was thinking of coming out there to visit you, but—but it would be better yet for you to stay right here in little old New York."

This brought back Kedzie's smile. But she faltered, "What if they hold me to my contract, though?"

"Then we'll bust the old contract. I'll buy 'em off. You needn't work for anybody."

There was enough of the old-fashioned woman of one sort left in Kedzie to relish the slave-block glory of being fought over by two purchasers. She spoke rather slyly: "But I'll be without wages then. How would I live? I've got to work."

Dyckman answered at once: "Of course not. I'll take care of you. I offered to before, you know." He had made a proposal of marriage some time before; it was the only sort of proposal that he had been tempted to make to Kedzie. He liked her immensely; she fascinated him;

he loved to pet her and kiss her and talk baby talk to her; but she had never inflamed his emotions.

Either it was the same with her, or she had purposely controlled herself and him from policy, or had been restrained by coldness or by a certain decency, of which she had a good deal, after all and in spite of all.

Throughout their relations they had deceived Ferriday and other cynics. For all their indifference to appearances, they had behaved like a well-behaved pair of young betrothed Americans, with a complete freedom from chaperonage, and a considerable liberality of endearments, but no serious misdemeanor.

Kedzie knew what he meant, but she wanted to hear him propose again. So she murmured:

"How do you mean, take care of me?"

"I mean—marry you, of course."

"Oh!" said Kedzie. And in a whirlwind of pride she twined her arms about his neck and clung to him with a desperate ardor.

Dyckman said: "This isn't my first proposal, you know. You said you wanted time to think it over. Haven't you thought it over yet?"

"Yes," Kedzie sighed, but she said no more.

"Well, what's the answer?" he urged.

"Yes."

She whispered, torn between rapture and despair.

Any woman might have blazed with pride at being asked to marry Jim Dyckman. The little villager was almost consumed like another Semele scorched by Jupiter's rash approach.

In Dyckman's clasp Kedzie felt how lonely she had been. She wanted to be gathered in from the dangers of the world, from poverty and from work. She had not realized how tiny a thing she was, to be combating the big city all alone, until some one offered her shelter.

People can usually be brave and grim in the presence of defeat and peril and hostility. It is the kind word,

the sudden victory, the discovery of a friend that breaks one down. Even Kedzie wept.

She wept all over Jim Dyckman's waistcoat, sat on his lap and swallowed throat-lumps and tears and tugged at his cuff-links with her little fingers.

Then she looked up at him and blushed and kissed him fiercely, hugging him with all the might of her arms. He was troubled by the first frenzy she had ever shown for him, and he might have learned how much more than a merely pretty child she was if she had not suddenly felt an icy hand laid on her hands, unclasping them.

A cold arm seemed to bend about her throat and drag her back. She slid from Dyckman's knees, gasping:

"Oh!"

She could not become Mrs. Jim Dyckman, because she was Mrs. Thomas Gilfoyle.

Dyckman was astounded and frightened by her action. He put his hand out, but she unclenched his fingers from her wrist, mumbling:

"Don't—please!"

"Why not? What's wrong with you, child?"

How could she tell him? What could she do? She must do a lot of thinking. On one thing she was resolved: that she would not give Dyckman up. She would find Gilfoyle and get quit of him. They had been married so easily; there must be an easy way of unmarrying.

She studied Dyckman. She must not frighten him away, or let him suspect. She laughed nervously and went back to his arms, giggling:

"Such a wonderful thing it is to have you want me for your wife! I'm not worthy of your name, or your love, or anything."

Dyckman could hardly agree to this, whatever misgivings might be shaking his heart. He praised her with the best adjectives in his scant vocabulary and asked her when they should be wed.

"Oh, not for a long while yet," she pleaded.

"Why?" he wondered.

"Oh, because!" It sickened and alarmed her to put off the day, but how could she name it?

When he left her at last the situation was still a bit hazy. He had proposed and been accepted vaguely. But when he had gallantly asked her to "say when" she had begged for time.

Dyckman, once outside the spell of Kedzie's eyes and her warmth, felt more and more dubious. He was ashamed of himself for entertaining any doubts of the perfection of his situation, but he was ashamed also of his easy surrender. Here he was with his freedom gone. He had escaped the marriage-net of so many women of so much brilliance and prestige, and yet a little movie actress had landed him.

He compared Anita Adair with Charity Coe, and he had to admit that his fiancée suffered woefully in every contrast. He could see the look of amazement on Charity's face when she heard the news. She would be completely polite about it, but she would be appalled. So would his father and mother. They would fight him tremendously. His friends would give him the laugh, the big ha-ha! They would say he had made a fool of himself; he had been an easy mark for a little outsider.

He wondered just how it had happened. The fact was that Kedzie had appealed to his pity. That was what none of the other eligibles had ever done, least of all Charity the ineligible.

He went home. He found his father and mother playing double Canfield and wrangling over it as usual. They were disturbed by his manner. He would not tell them what was the matter and left them to their game. It interested them no more. It seemed so unimportant whether the cards fell right or not. The points were not worth the excitement. Their son was playing solitaire, and it was not coming out at all. They dis-

cussed the possible reasons for his gloom. There were so many.

"I wish he'd get married to some nice girl," sighed Mrs. Dyckman. A mother is pretty desperate when she wants to surrender her son to another woman.

CHAPTER XXV

KEDZIE made a bad night of it. She hated her loneliness. She hated her room. She hated her maid. She wanted to live in the Dyckman palace and have a dozen maids and a pair of butlers to boss around, and valets, and a crest on her paper, and invitations pouring in from people whose pictures were in "the social world." She wanted to snub somebody and show certain folks what was what.

The next morning she was sure of only one thing, and that was that Dyckman had asked her to be his wife; and be his wife she would, no matter what it cost.

She wondered how she could get rid of Gilfoyle, whom she looked upon now as nothing less than an abductor. He was one of those "cadets" the papers had been full of a few years before, who lured young girls to ruin under the guise of false marriages and then sold them as "white slaves."

Kedzie's wrath was at the fact that Gilfoyle was not legally an abductor. She would have been glad merely to be ruined, and she would have rejoiced at the possibility of a false marriage. In the movies the second villain only pretended to be a preacher, and then confessed his guilt. But such an easy solution was not for Kedzie. New York City had licensed Gilfoyle's outrage; the clerk had sold her to him for two dollars; the Municipal Building was the too, too solid witness.

She felt a spiritual solace in the fact that she had not had a religious marriage. The sacrament was only municipal and did not count. Her wedding had lacked the blessing of the duly constituted ministry; therefore

it was sacrilegious; therefore it was her conscientious duty to undo the pagan knot as quickly as possible. She reverted to the good old way of the Middle Ages. There was no curse of divorce then, and indeed there was small need of it, since annulment could usually be managed on one religious ground or another, or if not, people went about their business as if it had been managed.

Kedzie felt absolved of any fault of selfishness now, and justified in taking any steps necessary to the punishment of Gilfoyle. *Religion* is a large, loose word, and it can be made to fit any motive; but once assumed it seems to strengthen every resolution, to chloroform mercy and hallow any means to the self-sanctified end. What people would shrink from as inhuman they constantly embrace as divine.

Kedzie wondered how she could communicate with her adversary. She might best go to Chicago and fight herself free there. There would be less risk of Dyckman's hearing about it.

She shuddered at what she would have to tell him unless she kept the divorce secret. He might not love her if he knew she was not the nice new girl he thought her, but an old married woman. And what would he say when he found that her real name was Mrs. Thomas Gilfoyle *née* Kedzie Thropp?

But first Kedzie must divorce herself from the Hyperfilm Company. She went to the studio with rage in her heart. She told Ferriday that she would not go to California. He proposed that she break with the Hyperfilm Company and form a corporation of her own with Dyckman as angel.

Kedzie was wroth at this. From now on, spending Dyckman's money would be like spending her own. Ferriday, once her accomplice in the noble business of getting Dyckman to back her, was revealed now as a cheap swindler trying to keep Mrs. Dyckman in trade at her husband's expense.

"I'm through with the pictures, I tell you!" she stormed. "I'm sick of the cheap notoriety. I'm tired of being public property. I can't go out on the street without being pointed at. It's disgusting. I don't want to be incorporated or photographed or interviewed. I want to be let alone. I'm tired. I've worked too hard. I need a rest."

Ferriday hated her with great agility. He had been willing to abet her breach of contract, provided she let him form a new company, but if she would not that made a great difference. He reminded her:

"The Hyperfilm Company will hold you to your bond. They want your hundred and twenty-five pounds of flesh. If you should break with them they'd have a case against you for damages."

"How much?" said Kedzie, feeling like Mrs. Crœsus.

Ferriday whistled and murmured: "Spoken like the wife of a multimillionaire! So you've got him at last."

"To who," Kedzie began, with an owl-like effect that she corrected with some confusion, "—to whom do you refer to?"

Ferriday grinned: "You're going to marry out of the movies, and you're going to try to horn into sassiety. Well, I warned you before that if you became Dyckman's wife you would find his world vastly different from the ballroom and drawing-room stuff you pull off in the studio—strangely and mysteriously different."

He frightened her. She was not sure of herself. She could not forget Nimrim, Missouri, and her arrival at the edge of society *via* the Bronx, the candy-shop, and the professional camera.

She felt that the world had not treated her squarely. Why should she have to carry all this luggage of her past through the gate with her? She wondered if it would not be better to linger in the studios till she grew more famous and could bring a little prestige along.

But Ferriday was already ousting her even from that security.

"The managers of the Hyperfilm Company will think you have done them dirt, but I'll explain that you are not really responsible. You've seen a million dollars, and you're razzle-dazzled. They'll want a bit of that million, I suppose, as liquidated damages, but I'll try to keep them down."

Kedzie was at bay in her terror. She struck back.

"Tell 'em they won't get a cent if they try to play the hog."

"They don't have hogs on Fifth Avenue, Anita. Don't forget that Well, good-by and good luck."

This was more like an eviction than a desertion. Kedzie felt a little softening of her heart toward the old homestead.

"I'm sure I'm much obliged for all you've done for me."

Ferriday roared his scorn.

She went on: "I am. Honest-ly! And I hope I haven't caused you too much inconvenience."

Ferriday betrayed how much he was hurt by his violent efforts to conceal it.

"Not at all. It happens that I've just found another little girl to take your place. This one drifted in among the extras, just as you did, and she's a dream. I'll show her to the managers, and they may be so glad to get her they won't charge you a cent. In fact, if you say the word, I might manage it so that they would pay you something to cancel your contract."

This was quite too cruel. It crushed the tears out of Kedzie's eyes, and she had no fight left in her. She simply stammered:

"No, thank you. Don't bother. Well, good-by."

"Good-by, Anita—good luck!"

He let her make her way out of his office alone. She had to skirt the studio. From behind a canvas wall over which the Cooper-Hewitt tubes rained a quivering blue glare came the words of the assistant director:

"Now choke her, Hazlitt! Harder! Register despair, Miss Hardy. Try to scream and can't! That's good. Now, Walsh, jump in to the rescue. Slug him. Knock his bean off. 'S enough! Fall, Hazlitt. Now gather up Miss Hardy, Walsh. Register devotion, gratitude, adoration—now you got it. Turn on your lamps full power, dearie! Wow! Bully! A couple of tears, please. That's the stuff. You'll be the queen of the world. Weep a little more. Real tears. That's it! Now clinch for the fade-out. Cut!"

Kedzie tiptoed away. She felt as Eve must have felt sneaking out of Eden and hearing the nightingales wrangling and the leopards at play.

CHAPTER XXVI

WE must fly fast and keep on flying if we would escape from our pasts. Ambition, adventure, or sheer luck may carry us forward out of them as in a cavalry-foray over strange frontiers, but sooner or later we must wait for our wagons or fall back to them.

Kedzie's past was catching up with her. It is a glorious thing when one's past comes up loaded with food, munitions, good deeds, charities, mercies, valued friendships. But poor little Kedzie's little past included one incompetent and unacknowledged husband and two village parents.

Kedzie had concealed the existence of Gilfoyle from her new friends as anxiously as if he had been a baby born out of wedlock instead of a grown man born into it. And Gilfoyle had returned the compliment. He had not told his new friends in Chicago that he was married, because the Anita Adair that he had left in New York was, as F. P. A. would say, his idea of nothing to brag about.

Gilfoyle had loved Kedzie once as a pretty photographer's model, and had admired her as an exquisite dancing-creature who seemed to have spun off at a tangent from the painted side of an old Greek amphora. He had actually written poetry to her! And when a poet has done that for a girl he feels that he has done more for her than she can ever repay. Even if she gives him her mortal self, what is that to the immortality he has given her?

When Kedzie telegraphed Gilfoyle that she had lost her job in Newport and had arrived in New York lonely and afraid, had he not taken care of her good name by

giving her his own? Not to mention a small matter of all his money!

She had repaid him with frantic discontent. The morning after the wedding, was she not imitating the parrot's shrill ridicule of life and love? Did she ridicule his poetry, or didn't she? She did. Instead of being his nine Muses, she had become his three Furies.

When he lost his job and she went out to get one of her own, had she succeeded in getting anything with dignity in it? No! She had become an extra woman in a movie mob. That was a belittling thing to remember. But worst of all, she had committed the unpardonable sin for a woman—she had lent him money. He could never forgive or forget the horrible fact that he had borrowed her last cash to pay his fare to Chicago.

Next to that for inexcusableness was her self-support—and, worse, self-sufficiency. Gilfoyle had sent Kedzie no money beyond returning what he had borrowed, and she had not used that to buy a ticket to Chicago with. She had written rarely, and had not asked him for money. That was mighty convenient for him, but it was extremely suspicious, and he cherished it as a further grudge.

He never found himself quite flush enough to force any money on her, because he had found that it costs money to live in Chicago, too. People in New York get the idea that it costs everything to live in New York and nothing to live anywhere else—if it can be called living.

Gilfoyle also discovered that his gifts were not appreciated in Chicago as he had expected them to be. Chicago people seemed to think it quite natural for New York to call for help from Chicago, and successful Western men were constantly going East; but for a New-Yorker to revert to Chicago looked queer. He appeared to patronize, and yet he must have had some peculiar reason for giving up New York.

All in all and by and large, Gilfoyle was not happy in Chicago. The few persons, mainly women, who took

him up as an interesting novelty grew tired of him. His advertising schemes did not dazzle the alert Illini. For one reason or another the wares he celebrated did not "go big."

He lost his first job and took an inferior wage with a shabbier firm. He took his women friends to the movies now instead of the theaters. And so it was that one night when he was beauing a Denver woman, who was on her way to New York and fame, he found the box-line extending out on the sidewalk and half-way up the block. It was irksome to wait, but people like to go to shows where the crowds are. He took his place in the line, and his Miss Clampett stood at his elbow.

The queue was slowly drawn into the theater and he finally reached a place in front of the lithographs. He almost jumped out of his skin when he saw a colossal head of Anita Adair smiling at him from a sunbonnet streaming with curls.

The letterpress informed Gilfoyle that it was indeed his own Anita. The people in the line were talking of her as the new star. They were calling her familiarly by her first name and discussing her with all the freedom of the crowd:

"That's Anita. Ain't she sweet?"

"Everybody says Anita's just too lovely."

"Some queen, boy? Me for Anita. She can pack her clothes in my trunk!"

Gilfoyle felt that he ought in common decency to knock down this fellow who claimed the privileges belonging to himself. But he remembered that he had abandoned those privileges. And the fellow looked unrefinedly powerful.

Gilfoyle gnawed the lip of silence, realizing also that his announcement would make a strange impression on Miss Clampett. She was one of those authors one reads about who think it necessary to hunt experiences and live romances in order to find literary material.

Gilfoyle had done his best to teach her how wildly well a born New-Yorker can play the lute of emotion. To proclaim now that he was the anonymous husband of this glitterer on the billboard would have been a shocking confession.

Gilfoyle swallowed his secret, but it made his heart flutter tremendously. When at length he and Miss Clampett were admitted to the theater and walked down the aisle Kedzie came from the background of the screen forward as if to meet him. She came on and on, and finally as he reached his seat, a close-up of her brought them face to face with a vividness that almost knocked him over. She looked right at him, seemed to recognize him, and stopped short.

He felt as guilty as if she had actually caught him at a rendezvous. Yet he felt pride, too.

This luminous being was his wife. He remembered all that she had been to him. Miss Clampett noted his perturbations and made a brilliant guess at their cause. She asked him if he wanted to leave her and go around to the stage door to meet this wonderful Miss Adair. Gilfoyle laughed poorly at her quip. He was surprised to learn from her that Anita Adair was already a sensation among the film stars. He had not chanced to read the pages where her press-matter had celebrated her. He defended himself from the jealousy of Miss Clampett very lamely; for the luscious beauty of his Anita, her graphic art, and her sway over the audience rekindled his primal emotions to a greater fire than ever.

When the show was over he abandoned Miss Clampett on her door-step and went to his own boarding-house in a nympholepsy. He was a mortal wedded to a fairy. He was Endymion with a moon enamoured of him. Kedzie indeed had come down from the screen to Gilfoyle, clothed in an unearthly effulgence.

The next morning he turned to the moving-picture columns of the Chicago *Tribune*, the *Herald*, and the other

papers, and he found that Kedzie was celebrated there with enthusiasm by Kitty Kelly, "Mae Tinée," Mrs. Parsons, and the rest of the critics of the new art. On Sunday several of her interviews appeared, and her portraits, in eminent company.

Gilfoyle's forgotten affections came back to life, expanding and efflorescent. He throbbed with the wonder of it. The moving picture had brought romance again to earth.

Thousands of men all over the country were falling in love with Kedzie. Who had a better right to than her husband? Unconsciously his resentments against her fell away. His heart swelled with such plenitude of forgiveness that he might in time have overlooked the money she lent him. It was not a disgrace to accept money from a genius of her candle-power.

For a long while he had been afraid that she would telegraph him for funds, or descend on him in Chicago and bring a heavy baggage of necessities. Now he was no longer afraid of that. He was afraid that if he called on her in New York she might not remember him.

He had heard of the real and the alleged salaries of moving-picture stars, and he assumed that Kedzie must be as well paid as she was well advertised. He did not know of the measly little hundred dollars a week she was bound down to by her contract. If he had known he would have rejoiced, because one hundred dollars a week was about four times more than Gilfoyle had ever earned.

Of course Gilfoyle resolved to go to New York. Of course he started to telegraph his wife and found the telegram hard to write. Then he began a long letter and found it harder to write. And of course he finally decided to surprise her. He resigned his job. His resignation was accepted with humiliating cordiality.

Of course he took the Twentieth Century Limited to New York. It was more expensive, but it was quicker; and what did a few dollars matter, now that he was the

husband of such an earner? He had unwittingly hitched his wagon to a star, and now he would take a ride through heaven. He wrote a poem or two to that effect, and the train-wheels inspired his prosody.

He dreamed of an ideal life in which he should loll upon a sofa of ease, thrumming his lyre, while his wife devoted herself to her career outside.

Where would Horace and Virgil have been if they had not had their expenses paid by old Mr. Mæcenas? Since Mrs. Gilfoyle could afford to be a patroness, let her patronage begin at home. Her reward would be beyond price, for Gilfoyle decided to perpetuate her fame in powerful rhyme far outlasting the celluloid in which she was writing her name now.

Celluloid is perishable indeed, and very inflammable. Gilfoyle did not know that the Hyperfilm studio had burned to the ground before he saw Kedzie's picture in Chicago. But he blithely left that city to its fate and sped eastward.

CHAPTER XXVII

GILFOYLE reached New York on the Twentieth Century. It was an hour late, and so the railroad company paid him a dollar. He wished it had been later. In his present plight time was anything but money to him.

It took him some time to find the Hyperfilm Company's temporary studio. He learned of the fire, and his hope wavered. When he reached the studio Kedzie was not there. The news of her resignation had percolated even to the doorman, who rarely knew anything from inside or outside the studio—an excellent non-conductor of information he was. Gilfoyle had some difficulty in finding Kedzie's address, but at last he learned it, and he made haste to her apartment.

He was impressed by its gaudy vestibule. He told the hall-boy that he wanted to see Miss Adair.

"Name, please?"

"Just say a gentleman to see her."

"Gotta git the name, or I can't 'phome up. Miss Adair naturally won't see no gempman ain't got a name."

"Does she see many men?" Gilfoyle asked, with sudden alarm.

"Oh, nossa. Mainly Mr. Dyckman. But that's her business."

"What Dyckman is that, the rich Jim Dyckman?"

"Well, I ain't s'posed to give out info'mation."

"Are you supposed to take in money?" Gilfoyle juggled with a half-dollar.

The hall-boy juggled his eyes in unison, and laughed

yearningly: "I reckon I might let you up by mistake. Does you know Miss Adair right well?"

"Very well—I'm a relative of hers by marriage. I want to surprise her."

"Oh, well, you better go on up."

Gilfoyle applied the magic silver wafer to the itching palm and stepped into the elevator when it came.

CHAPTER XXVIII

KEDZIE was alone. She had sent her maid out to get some headache powders. She had had a good cry when she reached home. She had pondered her little brain into a kink, trying to figure out her campaign. When she had a headache, or a cold, or a sleepless night, or a lethargy, she always put a powder in her stomach. It never did any good, and she was always changing the nostrum, but she never changed the idea.

She felt ill and took off her street suit and her corsets, put on a soft, veilly thing, and stretched out on her long-chair.

She was coddling a photograph of Jim Dyckman. He had scrawled across it, "To Little Anita from Big Jim." She kissed the picture and cherished it to her aching breast.

The door-bell rang. She supposed that, as usual, the maid had forgotten to take her key with her. She went into the hall in a rage, still holding the photograph. She flung the door open—and in walked Gilfoyle.

She fell back stupefied. He grinned, and took her in with devouring eyes. If he had no right to devour her, who had? He approved of her with a rush of delight:

"Well, Anita, here I am. And how's the little wife?"

She could not answer him. He stared ferociously, and gasped as if he had forgotten how she had looked:

"Golly, but you're beautiful? Where's the little kiss?"

He threw his arms about her, garnering in the full sheaf of her beauty. She tried to escape, to protest, but he smothered her with his lips. She had been so long away from him, she had so long omitted him from her

plans, that she felt a sense of outrage in his assault. Something virginal had resumed her heart, and his proprietorship revolted her.

Her shoulders were so constrained that she could not push free. She could only raise her right hand outside his left arm, and reaching his face, thrust it away. Her nails were long and sharp. They tore deep gashes in his cheeks and across his nose.

He let her go with a yelp of pain and shame. His fists gathered; primeval instinct told him to smash the mask of pale hatred he saw before him. But he saw the photograph in her left hand. It had been bent double in the scuffle. He snatched at it and tore away the lower half. He read the inscription with disgust and growled:

"That's the reason you didn't write me! That's why you don't want to see me, eh? So he's keeping you! And that's why you resigned from the studio!"

The atrocity of this slander was too much. With a little cat-like yowl she went for him, dropping the broken photograph and spreading all ten claws.

He caught her arms and held them apart where she could scratch nothing more than his wrists, which she did venomously. The cat tribe is a bad tribe to fight at close quarters. One must kill or break loose.

When Kedzie tried to bite him, Gilfoyle realized that she was in no mood for argument. He dragged her to the living-room door and then flung her as far as he could from him. She toppled over into a chair and began to cry.

It was not a pretty scene. Gilfoyle took out his handkerchief and pressed it to his face and the bridge of his nose. Then he looked at the red marks and held them out for her to observe:

"See what you did to me!"

"I'm glad of it," she snapped. "I wish I'd torn your eyes out."

This alone would not necessarily have proved that she did not love him devotedly, but in this case it corroborated

a context of hatred. Gilfoyle felt rebuffed. There was a distinct lack of hospitality in her welcome. This reception was the very opposite of his imagined rencounter.

He did what a man usually does, revealing a masculine inability to argue with a woman. He told her all her faults of omission and commission as if that would bring her to a reconciliating humor. She listened awhile, and then answered, with a perfect logic that baffled him:

"All you say only goes to show that you don't love me. You never did. You went away and left me. I might have starved, for all you cared. But I've worked like a dog, and now that I've had a little success you come back and say: 'How's the little wife? Where's the little kiss?' Agh! And you dare to kiss me! And then you slander me. You don't give me credit for these plain little rooms that I rent with my own hard-earned money. You couldn't imagine me living in a place like this unless some man paid for it. Heaven knows I'd have lived with you long enough before I ever had a decent home. Humph! Well, I guess so! Humph!"

Gilfoyle mopped his face again and looked at his handkerchief. One's own blood is very interesting. The sight of his wounds did not touch Kedzie's heart. She could never feel sorry for anybody she was mad at.

Gilfoyle's wits were scattered. He mumbled, futilely, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it!"

"That's the way I feel about it!" Kedzie raged on. "I suppose you've had so many affairs of your own out there that you can't imagine anybody else being respectable, can you?"

Gilfoyle had not come East to publish his autobiography. He thought that a gesture of misunderstood despair would be the most effective evasion. So he made it, and turned away. He put his handkerchief to his nose and looked at it. He turned back.

"Would you mind if I went into your bathroom to wash my face?"

"I certainly would. Where do you think you are? You get on out before my maid comes back. I don't want her to think I receive men alone!"

Her heart was cold as a toad in her breast, and she loathed his presence. He repeated his excellent gesture of despair, sighed, "All right," and left the room. The two pieces of Jim Dyckman's photograph were still on the floor of the hall. He stooped quickly and silently and picked them up as he went out. He closed the door with all the elegy one can put in a door with a snap-lock.

He was about to press the elevator button, but he did not like to present himself gory to the elevator-boy. He walked down the marble and iron steps zigzagging around the elevator shaft.

He paused on various landings to think and mop. He looked at the photograph of Dyckman, and his heart spoiled in him. He recalled his wife's anxiety lest her maid should find a man there. He recalled the hall-boy's statement that Mr. Dyckman was often there. His wife was lying to him, plainly.

He had known detectives and newspaper men and had heard them speak of what a friend they had in the usual hall-boy. He thought that he had here the makings of a very pretty little bit of detectivity.

He reached the main floor, but made a hasty crossing of the gaudy vestibule without stopping to speak to the hall-boy. He had left his baggage at the station, expecting to send it to his wife's apartment when he found it. He had found it, but he could imagine what would happen to the baggage if he sent it there.

"All right!" he said to himself. "If it's war she wants, cry havoc and let slip the sleuth hounds."

He went to a drug-store and had his wounds sterilized and plastered, saying that a pet cat had scratched him.

"Just so," said the drug clerk, with a grin. "Pet cats are very dangerous."

Gilfoyle wanted to slug him, but he wanted his wounds

dressed more. He walked and walked down the back avenues till he reached his old boarding-house district near Greenwich Village. He found a landlady who had trusted him often and been paid eventually. He gave his baggage checks to an expressman and went into retirement for meditation.

When his suit-case arrived he got out the poems he had been writing to Anita. He clenched them for destruction, but an exquisite line caught his eye. Why should his art suffer because of a woman's perfidy? He had intended to sonnetize Anita into perenniality. She had played him false. Just for that he would leave her mortal. She should perish.

The poems would keep. He might find another and a worthier client for posterity. Or he might put an imaginary name there, as other poets had done. He wanted one that would slip into the poetry easily. He could use "Pepita" without deranging the rhyme.

He glared at the picture of Dyckman. He knew the face well. He had seen it in print numberless times. He had had the man pointed out to him at races and horse-shows and polo-games and bazaars.

He struck the photograph in the face, realizing that he could not have reached the face of the big athlete. He wondered why this fellow should have been given such stature with such wealth. He was ghastly rich, the snob, the useless cumberer of the ground!

All of Gilfoyle's pseudo-socialistic hostility to wealth and the wealthy came to the aid of his jealousy. To despoil the man was a duty. He had decoyed Anita from her duty by his millions. Not that she was unwilling to be decoyed. And now she would revel in her ill-got luxury, while her legal husband could starve in a garret.

As he brooded, the vision of Dyckman's money grew huger and huger. The dog had not merely thousands or hundreds of thousands, but thousands of thousands. Gilfoyle had never seen a thousand-dollar bill. Yet

Dyckman, he had heard, was worth twenty millions. If his wealth were changed into thousand-dollar bills there would be twenty thousand of them in a stack.

If Gilfoyle peeled off one thousand of those thousand-dollar bills the stack would not be perceptibly diminished. If Gilfoyle could get a million dollars from Dyckman, or any part of it, Dyckman would never notice it; and yet it would mean a life of surety and poetry and luxury for Gilfoyle.

If he caught Dyckman and Anita together in a compromising situation he could collect heavily under threat of exposure. Rather than be dragged into the newspapers and the open courts Dyckman would pay almost any sum.

There was a law in New York against the violation of the seventh commandment, and the penitentiary was the punishment. The law had failed to catch its first victim, but it had been used in Massachusetts with success. The threat against Dyckman would surely work.

Then there was the recent Mann Law aimed at white-slavery but a more effective weapon for blackmailers. If Gilfoyle could catch Dyckman taking Anita motoring across the State line into New Jersey or Connecticut he could arrest them or threaten them.

Also he could name Dyckman as co-respondent in a divorce suit—or threaten to—and collect heavily that way. This was not blackmail in Gilfoyle's eyes. He scorned such a crime. This was honorable and necessary vindication of his offended dignity. There was probably never a practiser of blackmail who did not find a better word for the duress he applied.

Gilfoyle needed help. He had no cash to hire a detective with. But he knew a detective or two who might go into the thing with him on spec'.

Gilfoyle began to compose a scheme of poetic revenge. It should be his palinode to Anita. He would keep her under surveillance, but he would not let her know of his

propinquity. A happy thought delighted him. To throw her off her guard, he wrote and sent a little note:

DEAR ANITA,—Since you evidently don't love me any longer, I will not bother you any more. I am taking the train back to Chicago. Address me there care of General Delivery if you ever want to see me again.

YOUR ONCE LOVED HUSBAND.

He addressed it and gave it to the waitress to drop in the mail-box. He had no money to squander on detectives, but he had a friend, Connery, who as a reporter had achieved a few bits of sleuthing in cases that had baffled the police. That evening Gilfoyle went hunting for Connery.

CHAPTER XXIX

KEDZIE simmered in her own wrath a long while before she realized that she had let Gilfoyle escape. He was the very man she was looking for, and she had planned to go even to Chicago to find him.

He had stumbled into her trap, and she had driven him out. She ran to the window and stared up and down the street, but there was no trace of him. She had no idea where he could have gone. She wrung her hands and denounced herself for a fool.

She went to the hall to pick up the photograph of Jim Dyckman. Both halves of it were gone. Now she was frightened. Gilfoyle had departed meekly, but he had taken the picture; therefore he must have been filled with hate. He had revenge in his mind. And she trembled at her danger. He might strike at any time.

She suspected his exact intention. She dreaded to have Jim Dyckman call on her. She had a wild notion of asking him to take her away from New York—down to Atlantic City or up to the Berkshires—anywhere to be rid of Gilfoyle without being left alone. If she had done this she would have done just what Gilfoyle wanted her to, and the Mann Act could have been wielded again as a blackjack.

Meanwhile Anita was afraid to have Dyckman come to her apartment as he constantly did. She telephoned to him that she would be busy at the studio all day. She would meet him at dinner somewhere. But afterward she would come home alone on one pretext or another.

She carried out this plan—and spent a day of confused terror and anger.

When Gilfoyle's letter arrived, saying that he was on his way to Chicago, it gave her more delight than any other writing of his had ever given her. She need not skulk any more. Her problem was as far from solution as ever, but she wanted a respite from it, and she gave herself up to a few days of rapture. She was free from her work at the studio, and she was like a girl home from boarding-school on a vacation.

Dyckman found her charming in this mood. She made a child of him, and his years of dissatisfaction were forgotten. He romped through the festivals of New York like a cub.

There was no discussion of any date of marriage, and he was glad enough to let the matter drift. He did not want to marry Kedzie. He was satisfied to have her as a playmate. He was afraid to think of her as a wife, not only from fear of the public sensation it would make, but from fear of her in his home. Young men also know the timidities that are considered maidenly. He did not dream of Kedzie's reason for postponing always the matter of a wedding date.

Kedzie had come to depend on Jim for her entertainment. He took care of her evenings, gave them vivacity and opulence. He took her to theaters, to the opera, the music-halls, the midnight roofs, and other resorts for the postponement of sleep. Occasionally he introduced her to friends of his whom they encountered. It pained and angered him, and Kedzie, too, to note that the men were inclined to eye Kedzie with tolerant amusement. There was a twinkle of contempt in their smiling eyes that seemed to say:

"Where did Dyckman pick you up, my pretty?"

Kedzie's movie fame was unknown to Dyckman's crowd. She was treated, accordingly, as some exquisite chorus-girl or cabaret-pony that he had selected as a running-mate.

Dyckman could not openly resent what was subtly implied, but it touched his chivalry, and since he was engaged to Kedzie he felt that he ought at least to announce the fact. He was getting the game without the name, and that seemed unfair to Kedzie.

Kedzie felt the same veiled scorn, and it alarmed her; yet when Dyckman proposed the publication of their troth she forbade it vigorously. She writhed at the worse than Tantalus fate that compelled her to push from her own thirsty lips the grapes of felicity.

She had no intention of committing bigamy, even if she had been temptable to such recklessness. The inevitable brevity of its success was only too evident. A large part of the fun of marrying Dyckman would be the publication of it, and that would bring Gilfoyle back. She never before longed so ardently to see her husband as now.

She finally wrote him a letter begging him to return to New York for a conference. She couched it in luringly affectionate tones and apologized lavishly for scratching his face when he called. She addressed the appeal to the General Delivery in Chicago, as he had directed in the letter he wrote as a blind.

She neglected, as usual, to put her own address on the envelope or inside on the letter, which she signed with a mere "Anita." Gilfoyle did not call for the letter in Chicago, since he was in New York. It was held in Chicago for the legal period and then it was sent to the Dead Letter Office, where a clerk wasted a deal of time and ingenuity in an effort to trace the sender or the addressee.

Kedzie meanwhile had watched for the postman and hunted through her mail with frenzy. There was a vast amount of mail, for it is one of the hardships of the movie business that the actors are fairly showered with letters of praise, criticism, query, and flirtation.

But there was no letter ever from Gilfoyle.

Yet Gilfoyle was constantly within hailing distance. With the aid of his friend Connery he had concocted a scheme for keeping Kedzie and Dyckman under espionage. They had speedily learned that Dyckman was in constant attendance on Kedzie, and that they were careless of the hours alone, careless of appearances.

Gilfoyle never dreamed that the couple was chaperoned doubly by a certain lukewarmth of emotion and by an ambition to become man and wife. Gilfoyle imagined their relations to be as intimate as their opportunities permitted. He suffered jealous wrath, and would have assaulted Dyckman in public if Connery had not quelled him.

Connery kept a cool head in the matter because his heart was not involved. He saw the wealth of Dyckman as the true object of their attack, and he convinced Gilfoyle of the profitableness of a little blackmail. He convinced Gilfoyle easily when they were far from Kedzie and close to poverty; but when they hovered near Kedzie, Connery had the convincing to do all over again.

He worked up an elaborate campaign for gaining entrance to Kedzie's apartment without following the classic method of smashing the door down. He disliked that noisy approach because it would command notice; and publicity, as he well knew, is death to blackmail.

Connery adopted a familiar stratagem of the private detectives. He went to the apartment one day when he knew that Kedzie was out, and inquired for an alleged sister of his who had worked for Kedzie. He claimed to be a soldier on furlough. He engaged the maid in a casual parley which he led swiftly to a flirtation. She was a lonely maid and her plighted lover was away on a canal-boat. Connery had little difficulty in winning her to the acceptance of an invitation to visit a movie-show on her first evening off.

He paid the girl flattering attentions, and when he brought her back, gallantly asked for the key to unlock

the door for her. He dropped the key on the floor, stooped for it, pressed it against a bit of soft soap he had in his left palm. Having secured the outline of the key, he secured also a return engagement for the next evening off. On this occasion he brought with him a duplicate of the key, and when he unlocked the door for the maid this time he gave her the duplicate and kept the original.

And now that he and Gilfoyle had an "open sesame" to the dovecote they grew impatient with delay. Gilfoyle's landlady had also grown impatient with delay, but Connery forced her to wait for what he called the psychological moment.

And thus Kedzie moved about, her life watched over by an invisible husband like a malignant Satan to whom she had sold her soul.

CHAPTER XXX

JIM DYCKMAN had many notes from Kedzie, gushing, all adjectives and adverbs, capitalized and underscored. He left them about carelessly, or locked them up and left the key. If he had not done that the lock on his desk was one that could be opened with a hairpin or with a penknife or with almost any key of a proper size.

There was no one to care except his valet. Dallam cared and read and made notes. He was horrified at the thought of Dyckman's marrying a movie actress. He would have preferred any intrigue to that disgrace. It would mean the loss of a good position, too, for while Dyckman was an easy boss, if he were going to be an easy marrier as well, Dallam had too much self-respect to countenance a marriage beneath them.

If he could only have known of Gilfoyle's existence and his quests, how the two of them could have collaborated!

But Dallam's interest in life woke anew when one evening, as he was putting away the clothes Dyckman had thrown off, he searched his master's coat and found a letter from Mrs. Cheever.

DEAR OLD JIM,—What's happent you? I haven't seen you for ages. Couldn't you spare this evening to me? I'm alone —as always—and lonelier than usual. Do take pity on

Your devoted

CHARITY C.

That note, so lightly written in seeming, had been torn from a desperate heart and written in tears and blood.

Since she had learned that her husband really loved

Zada and that she was going to mother him a child, Charity had been unable to adjust her soul to the new problem.

The Reverend Doctor Mosely had promised her advice, but the poor man could not match his counsel with the situation. He did not believe in divorce, and yet he did not approve of illegal infants. How happy he could have been with either problem, with t'other away! In his dilemma he simply avoided Charity and turned his attention to the more regular chores of his parish.

Charity understood his silence, and it served to deepen her own perplexity. She was sure of only one thing—that she was caged and forgotten.

Cheever came home less and less, and he was evidently so harrowed with his own situation that Charity felt almost more sorry for him than angry at him. She imagined that he must be enduring no little from the whims and terrors of Zada. He was evidently afraid to speak to Charity. To ask for her mercy was contrary to all his nature. He never dreamed that the dictagraph had brought her with him when he learned of Zada's intensely interesting condition, and her exceedingly onerous demands. He did not dare ask Charity for a divorce in order that he might legitimize this byblow of his. He could imagine only that she would use the information for some ruinous vengeance. So he dallied with his fate in dismal irresolution.

Charity had his woes to bear as well as her own. She knew that she had lost him forever. The coquetries she had used to win him back were impossible even to attempt. He had no use for her forgiveness or her charms. He was a mere specter in her home, doomed for his sins to walk the night.

In despising herself she rendered herself lonelier. She had not even herself for companion. Her heart had always been eager with love and eager for it. The spirit that impelled her to endure hardships in order to expend

her surplusage of love was unemployed now. She had feasted upon love, and now she starved.

Cheever had been a passionate courtier and, while he was interested, a fiery devotee. When he abandoned her she suffered with the devastation that deserted wives and recent widows endure but must not speak of. It meant terribly much to Charity Coe to be left alone. It was dangerous to herself, her creeds, her ideals.

She began to be more afraid of being alone than of any other fear. She grew resentful toward the conventions that held her. She was like a tigress in a wicker cage, growing hungrier, lither, more gracefully fierce.

People who do not use their beauty lose it, and Charity had lost much of hers in her vigils and labors in the hospitals, and it had waned in her humiliations of Cheever's preference for another woman. Her jealous shame at being disprized and notoriously neglected had given her wanness and bitterness, instead of warmth and sweetness.

But now the wish to be loved brought back loveliness. She did not know how beautiful she was again. She thought that she wanted to see Jim Dyckman merely because she wanted to be flattered and because—as women say in such moods—men are so much more sensible than women. Often they mean more sensitive. Charity did not know that it was love, not friendship, that she required when at last she wrote to Jim Dyckman and begged him to call on her.

The note struck him hard. It puzzled him by its tone. And he, remembering how vainly he had pursued her, forgot her disdain and recalled only how worthy of pursuit she was. He hated himself for his disloyalty to Anita in comparing his fiancée with Charity, and he cursed himself for finding Charity infinitely Anita's superior in every way. But he hated and cursed in vain.

Kedzie, or "Anita," as he called her, was an outsider, a pretty thing like a geisha, fascinating by her oddity and

her foreignness, but, after all, an alien who could interest one only temporarily. There was something transient about Kedzie in his heart, and he had felt it vaguely the moment he found himself pledged to her forever. But Charity—he had loved her from perambulator days. She was his tradition. His thoughts and desires had always come home to Charity.

Yet he was astonished at the sudden upheaval of his old passion. It shook off the new affair as a volcano burns away the weeds that have grown about its crater. He supposed that Charity wanted to take up the moving-picture scheme in earnest, and he repented the fact that he had gone to the studio for information and had come away with a flirtation.

One thing was certain: he must not fail to answer Charity's summons. He had an engagement with Kedzie, but he called her up and told her the politest lie he could concoct. Then he made himself ready and put on his festival attire.

Charity had grown sick of having people say, "How pale you are!" "You've lost flesh, haven't you?" "Have you been ill, dear?"—those tactless observations that so many people feel it necessary to make, as if there were no mirrors or scales or symptoms for one's information and distress.

Annoyed by these conversational harrowers, Charity had finally gone to her dressmaker, Dutilh, and asked him to save her from vegetation! He saw that she was a young woman in sore need of a compliment, and he flattered her lavishly. He did more for her improvement in five minutes than six doctors, seventeen clergymen, and thirty financiers could have done. A compliment in time is a heart-stimulant with no acetanilid reaction. Also he told her how wonderful she had been in the past, recalling by its name and by the name of its French author many a gown she had worn, as one would tell a great actress what rôles he had seen her in.

He clothed her with praise and encouragement, threw a mantle of crimson velvet about her. And she crimsoned with pride, and her hard, thin lips velveted with beauty.

She responded so heartily that he was enabled to sell her a gown of very sumptuous mode, its colors laid on as with the long sweeps of a Sargent's brush. A good deal of flesh was not left to the imagination; as in a Sargent painting, the throat, shoulders, and arms were part of the color scheme. It was a gown to stride in, to stand still in, in an attitude of heroic repose, or to recline in with a Parthenonian grandeur.

This gown did not fit her perfectly, just as it came from Paris, but it revealed its possibilities and restored her shaken self-confidence immeasurably. If women—or their husbands—could afford it, they would find perhaps more consolation, restoration, and exaltation at the dressmakers' than at—it would be sacrilege to say where.

By the time Charity's new gown was ready for the last fitting Charity had lost her start, and when Dutilh went into the room where she had dressed he was aghast at the difference. On the first day the gown had thrilled her to a collaboration with it. Now she hardly stood up in it. She drooped with exaggerated awkwardness, shrugged her shoulders with sarcasm, and made a face of disgust.

Dutilh tried to mask his disappointment with anger. When Charity groaned, "Aren't we awful—this dress and I?" he retorted: "You are, but don't blame the gown. For God's sake, do something for the dress. It would do wonders for you if you would help it!" He believed in a golden rule for his wares: do for your clothes what you would have them do for you.

He threatened not to let Charity have the gown at all at any price. He ordered her to take it off. She refused. In the excitement of the battle she grew more animated. Then he whirled her to a mirror and said:

"Look like that, and you're a made woman."

She was startled by the vivacity, the authority she saw in her features so long dispirited. She caught the trick of the expression. And actors know that one's expression can control one's moods almost as much as one's moods control one's expressions.

So she persuaded Dutilh to sell her the dress. When she got it she did not know just when to wear it, for she was going out but rarely, and then she did not want to be conspicuous. She decided to make Jim Dyckman's call the occasion for the launching of the gown. His name came up long before she had put it on to be locked in for the evening.

When she thrust her arms forward like a diver and entered the gown by way of the fourth dimension her maid cried out with pride, and, standing with her finger-tips scattered over her face, wept tears down to her knuckles. She welcomed the prodigal back to beauty.

"Oh, ma'am, but it's good to see you lookin' lovely again!"

While she bent to the engagement of the hooks Charity feasted on her reflection in the cheval-glass. She was afraid that she was a little too much dressed up and a little too much undressed. There in Dutilh's shop, with the models and the assistants about, she was but a lay figure, a clothes-horse. At the opera she would have been one of a thousand shoulder-showing women. For a descent upon one poor caller, and a former lover at that, the costume frightened her.

But it was too late to change, and she caught up a scarf of gossamer and twined it round her neck to serve as a mitigation.

Hearing her footsteps on the stairs at last, Dyckman hurried to meet her. As she swept into the room she collided with him, softly, fragrantly. They both laughed nervously, they were both a little influenced.

She found the drawing-room too formal and led him

into the library. She pointed him to a great chair and seated herself on the corner of a leather divan nearly as big as a touring-car. In the dark, hard frame she looked richer than ever. He could not help seeing how much more important she was than his Anita.

Anita was pretty and peachy, delicious, kissable, huggable, a pleasant armful, a lapload of girlish mischief. Charity was beautiful, noble, perilous, a woman to live for, fight for, die for. Kedzie was to Charity as Rosalind to Isolde.

It was time for Jim to play Tristan, but he had no more blank verse in him than a polo score-card. Yet the simple marks on such a form stand for tremendous energy and the utmost thrill.

"Well, how are you, anyway, Charity? How goes it with you?" he said. "Gee! but you look great to-night. What's the matter with you? You're stunning!"

Charity laughed uncannily. "You're the only one that thinks so, Jim."

"I always did admire you more than anybody else could; but, good Lord! everybody must have eyes."

"I'm afraid so," said Charity. "But you're the only one that has imagination about me."

"Bosh!"

"My husband can't see me at all."

"Oh, him!" Jim growled. "What's he up to now?"

"I don't know," said Charity. "I hardly ever see him. He's chucked me for good."

Jim studied her with idolatry and with the intolerant ferocity of a priest for the indifferent or the skeptical. The idol made her plaint to her solitary worshiper.

"I'm horribly lonely, Jim. I don't go anywhere, meet anybody, do anything but mope. Nobody comes to see me or take me out. Even you kept away from me till I had to send for you."

"You ordered me off the premises in Newport, if you remember."

"Yes, I did, but I didn't realize that I was mistreating the only admirer I had."

This was rather startling in its possible implications. It scared Dyckman. He gazed at her until her eyes met his. There was something in them that made him look away. Then he heard the gasp of a little sob, and she began to cry.

"Why, Charity!" he said. "Why, Charity Coe!"

She smiled at the pet name and the tenderness in his voice, and her tears stopped.

"Jim," she said, "I told Doctor Mosely all about my affairs, and I simply spoiled his day for him and he dropped me. So I think I'll tell you."

"Go to the other extreme, eh?" said Jim.

"Yes, I'm between the devil and the high-Church. I've no doubt I'm to blame, but I can't seem to stand the punishment with no change in sight. I've tried to, but I've got to the end of my string and—well—whether you can help me or not—I've got to talk or die. Do you mind if I run on?"

"God bless you, I'd be tickled to death."

"It will probably only ruin your evening."

"Help yourself. I'd rather have vou wreck all my evenings than—than—"

He had begun well, which was more than usual. She did not expect him to finish. She thanked him with a look of more than gratitude.

"Jim," she said, "I've found out that my husband is—well—there's a certain ex-dancer named L'Etoile, and he—she—they—"

Instead of being astounded, Dyckman was glum.

"Oh, you've found that out at last, have you? Maybe you'll learn before long that there's trouble in France. But of course you know that. You were over there. Why, before you came back he was dragging that animal around with him. I saw him with her."

"You knew it as long ago as that?"

"Everybody knew it."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I'm a low-lived coward, I suppose. I tried to a dozen times, but somehow I couldn't. By gad! I came near writing you an anonymous letter. I couldn't seem to stoop to that, though, and I couldn't seem to rise to telling you out and out. And now that you know, what are you going to do about it?"

"That's what I don't know. Doctor Mosely wanted me to try to get him back."

"Doctor Mosely's got softening of the brain. To think of your trying to persuade a man to live with you! You of all people, and him of all people! Agh! If you got him, what would you have? And how long would you keep him? You can't make a household pet out of a laughing hyena. Chuck him, I say."

"But that means the divorce-court, Jim."

"What of it? It's cleaner and sweeter than this arrangement."

"But the newspapers?"

"Ah, what do you care about them? They'd only publish what everybody that knows you knows already. And what's the diff' if a lot of strangers find out that you're too decent to tolerate that man's behavior? Somebody is always roasting even the President, but he gets along somehow. A lot of good people oppose divorce, but I was reading that the best people used to oppose anesthetics and education and republics. It's absolutely no argument against a thing to say that a lot of the best people think it is outrageous. They've always fought everything, especially freedom for the women. They said it was dangerous for you to select your husbands, or manage your property, or learn to read, or go out to work, or vote, or be in a profession—or even be a war nurse. The hatred of divorce is all of a piece with the same old habit good people have of trying to mind other people's business for 'em."

"But Doctor Mosely says that marriage is a sacrament."

"Well, if a marriage like yours is a sacrament, give me a nice, decent white-slave market."

"That's the way it seems to me, but the Church, especially our Church, is so ferocious. Doctor Mosely preached a sermon against divorce and remarriage, and it was frightful what he said about women who change husbands. I'm afraid of it, Jim. I can't face the abuse and the newspapers, and I can't face the loneliness, either. I'm desperately lonely."

"For him?" Jim groaned.

"No, I've got over loving him. I'll never endure him again, especially now that she has a better right to him."

She could not bring herself at first to tell him what she knew of Zada, but at length she confessed that she had listened to the dictagraph and had heard that Zada was to be a mother. Dyckman was dumfounded; then he snarled:

"Thank God it's not you that's going to be—for him—Well, don't you call that divorce enough? How can you call your marriage a sacrament when he has gone and made a real sacrament with another woman? It takes two to keep a sacrament, doesn't it? Or does it? I don't think I know what a sacrament is. But I tell you, there was never a plainer duty in the world. Turn him over to his Zada. She's the worst woman in town, and she's too good for him, at that. I don't see how you can hesitate! How long can you stand it?"

"I don't know. I'm ready to die now. I'd rather die. I'd better die."

And once more she was weeping, now merely a lonely little girl. He could not resist the impulse to go to her side. He dropped down by her and patted her wrist gawkily. She caught his hand and clenched it with strange power. He could tell by her throat that her heart was leaping like a wild bird against a cage.

His own heart beat about his breast like a bird that has

been set frantic by another bird, and his soul ached for her. He yearned to put his long arm about her and hold her tight, but he could not.

He had never seen her so. He could not understand what it was that made a darkling mist of her eyes and gave her parted lips such an impatient ecstasy of pain.

Suddenly, with an intuition unusual to him, he understood. He shrank from her, but not with contempt or blame. There was something divine about his merciful comprehension, but his only human response was a most ungodly wrath. He got to his feet, muttering:

"I ought to kill him. Maybe I will. I've got to beat him within an inch of his life."

Charity was dazed by his abrupt revolt. "What do you mean, Jim? Who is it you want to beat?"

He laughed, a bloodthirsty laugh. "I'll find him!"

He rushed out into the hall, caught up his hat and coat, and was gone. Charity was bewildered out of her wits. She could not imagine what had maddened him. She only knew that Dyckman also had abandoned her. He would find Cheever and fight him as one stag another. And the only result would be the death of one or both and a far more odious disgrace than the scandal she had determined to avoid.

CHAPTER XXXI

DYCKMAN was at least half mad, and half inspired. Charity had been his lifelong religion. He had thought of her with ardor, but also with a kind of awe. He had wanted to be her husband. Failing to win her, he had been horrified to see that Cheever, possessing her, was still not satisfied.

He had never dreamed what this neglect might mean to her. He had not thought of her as mere woman, after all, with more than pride to satisfy, with more than a mind to suffer. When the realization overwhelmed him her nobility was not diminished in his eyes, but to all her former qualities was added the human element. She was flesh and blood, and a martyr in the flames. And the ingrate who had the godlike privilege of her embrace abandoned her for a public creature.

Dyckman felt himself summoned to avenge her.

It happened that he found the Cheever limousine waiting outside. He said to the chauffeur:

"Where does Miss Zada L'Etoile live?"

The chauffeur was startled. He answered, with a touch of raillery:

"Search me, sir. How should I know?"

"I want none of your back talk," said Dyckman, ready to maul the chauffeur or anybody for practice. He took out his pocket-book and lifted the first bill he came to. It was a yellow boy. He repeated, "Where does Zada L'Etoile live?"

The chauffeur told him and got the bill. It was better than the poke in the eye he could have had instead.

Dyckman had sent his own car home. He had difficulty in finding a taxicab on Fifth Avenue along there. At length he stopped one and named the apartment-house where Zada lived.

The hall-boy was startled by his manner, amazed to hear the famous Dyckman ask for Miss L'Etoile. He telephoned the name while Dyckman fumed. After some delay he was told to come up.

Zada was alone—at least Cheever was not there. She had been astounded when Dyckman's name came through the telephone. Her first thought had been that Cheever had met with an accident and that Dyckman was bringing the news. She had given up the hope of involving Dyckman with Mrs. Cheever, after wasting Cheever's money on vain detectives.

When Dyckman was ushered in she greeted him from her divan.

"Pardon my negligée," she said. "I'm not very well."

He saw at a glance that the dictagraph had told the truth. She was entirely too well. He felt his wrath at Zada vanishing. But this also he transferred to Cheever's account. He spoke as quietly as he could, though his face revealed his excitement.

"Sorry to trouble you, but I had hoped to find Mr. Cheever here."

"Mr. Cheever?! Here?!" Zada exclaimed, with that mixture of the interrogation and exclamation points for which we have no symbol. She tried to look surprised at the unimaginable suggestion of Cheever's being in her environs. She succeeded as well as Dyckman did in pretending that his errand was trivial.

"Er—yes, I imagined you might happen to know where I could find him. I have a little business with him."

Zada thought to crush him with a condescension—a manicurial sarcasm:

"Have you been to the gentleman's home?"

Dyckman laughed: "Yes, but he wasn't there. He isn't there much nowadays—they say."

"Oh, do they?" Zada sneered. "Well, did They tell you he would be here?"

"No, but I thought—"

"Better try his office in the morning.'

"Thanks. I can't wait. What club does he affect most now?"

"Ask They," said Zada, ending the interview with a labored yawn. But when Dyckman bowed and turned to go, her curiosity bested her indignation. "In case I should by any chance see him, could I give him your message?"

Dyckman laughed a sort of pugilistic laugh, and his self-conscious fist asserted itself.

"No, thanks, I'm afraid you couldn't. Good-by."

Zada saw his big fingers gathering—convening, as it were, into a fist like a mace, and she was terrified for her man. She scrambled to her feet and caught Dyckman in the hall.

"What are you going to do to Mr. Cheever?"

Dyckman answered in the ironic slang, "I'm not going to do a thing to him."

Zada's terror increased. "What harm has he ever done to you?"

"I didn't say he had done me any harm."

"Is it because of his wife?"

"Leave her out of it."

There was the old phrase again. Cheever kept hurling it at her whenever she referred to the third corner of the triangle.

Zada remembered when Cheever had threatened to kill Dyckman if he found him. Now he would be unarmed. He was not so big a man as Dyckman. She could see him being throttled slowly to death, leaving her and her child-to-be unprotected in their shameful folly.

"For God's sake, don't!" she implored him. "I'm not

well. I mustn't have any excitement. I beg you—for my sake—"

"For your sake," said Dyckman, with a scorn that changed to pity as she clung to him—"for your sake I'll give him a couple of extra jolts."

That was rather dazzling, the compliment of having Jim Dyckman as her champion! Her old habit of taking everybody's flattery made her forget for the moment that she was now a one-man woman. Her clutch relaxed under the compliment just long enough for Dyckman to escape without violence. He darted through the door and closed it behind him.

She tugged at the inside knob, but he was so long that he could hold the outside knob with one hand and reach the elevator-bell with the other.

When the car came up he released the knob and lifted his hat with a pleasant "Good-night." She dared not pursue him in the garb she wore.

She returned terrified to her room. Then she ran to the telephone to pursue Cheever and warn him. They had quarreled at the dinner-table. He had left her on the ground that it was dangerous for her to be excited as he evidently excited her. It is one of the most craven shifts of a man for ending an endless wrangle with a woman.

Zada tried three clubs before she found Cheever. When she heard his voice at last she was enraptured. She tried to entice him into her own shelter.

"I'm sorry I was so mean. Come on home and make peace with me."

"All right, dear, I will."

"Right away?"

"After a while, darling. I'm sitting in a little game of poker."

"You'd better not keep me waiting!" she warned. The note was an unfortunate reminder of his bondage. It rattled his shackles. He could not even have a few hours

with old cronies at the club. She was worse than Charity had ever dreamed of being. She heard the resentment in his answer and felt that he would stay away from her for discipline. She threw aside diplomacy and tried to frighten him home.

"Jim Dyckman is looking for you."

"Dyckman? Me! Why?"

"He wants to beat you up."

Cheever laughed outright at this. "You're crazy, darling. What has Dyckman got against me?"

"I don't know, but I know he's hunting you."

"I haven't laid eyes on him for weeks. We've had no quarrel."

Zada was frantic. She howled across the wire: "Come home, I beg and implore you. He'll hurt you—he may kill you."

Again Cheever laughed: "You're having hallucinations, my love. You'll feel better in the morning. Where the deuce did you get such a foolish notion, anyway?"

"From Jim Dyckman," she stormed. "He was here looking for you. If anybody's going crazy, he's the one. I had a struggle with him. He broke away. I begged him not to harm you, but he said he'd give you a few extra jolts for my sake. Please, please, don't let him find you there."

Cheever was half convinced and quite puzzled. He knew that Dyckman had never forgiven him for marrying Charity. The feud had smoldered. He could not conceive what should have revived it, unless Charity had been talking. He had not thought of any one's punishing him for neglecting her. But if Dyckman had enlisted in her cause—well, Cheever was afraid of hardly anything in the world except boredom and the appearance of fear. He answered Zada with a gruff:

"Let him find me if he wants to. Or since you know him so well, tell me where he'll be, and I'll go find him."

He could hear Zada's strangled moan. How many

times, since male and female began, have women made wild, vain protests against the battle-habit, the duel-tribunal? Mothers, daughters, wives, mistresses, they have been seldom heard and have been forced to wait remote in anguish till their man has come back or been brought back, victorious or baffled or defeated, maimed, wounded, or dead.

It meant everything to Zada that her mate should not suffer either death or publicity. But chiefly her love of him made outcry now. She could not endure the vision of her beloved receiving the hammering of the giant Dyckman.

The telephone crackled under the load of her prayers, but Cheever had only one answer:

"If you want me to run away from him or anybody, you don't get your wish, my darling."

Finally she shrieked, "If you don't come home I'll come there and get you."

"Ladies are not allowed in the main part of this club, dearest," said Cheever. "Thank God there are a few places where two men can settle their affairs without the help of womanly intuition."

"He wants to pound you to death," she screamed. "If you don't promise me, I'll come there and break in if I have to scratch the eyes out of the doorkeeper."

He knew that she was capable of doing this very thing; so he made answer, "All right, my dear. I surrender."

"You'll come home?"

"Yes, indeed. Right away."

"Oh, thank God! You do love me, then. How soon will you be here?"

"Very shortly, unless the taxi breaks down."

"Hurry!"

"Surely. Good-by!"

He hung up the reverberant receiver and said to the telephone-boy: "If anybody calls me, I've gone out. No matter who calls me, I'm out."

"Yes, sir."

Then he went to the card-room, found that the game had gone on without him, cashed in his chips, and excused himself. He was neither winning nor losing, so that he could not be accused of "cold feet." That was one of the most intolerable accusations to him. He could violate any of the Commandments, but in the sportsman's decalogue "Thou shalt not have cold feet" was one that he honored in the observance, not the breach.

He went down to the reading-room, a palatial hall fifty yards long with a table nearly as big as a railroad platform, on a tremendous rug as wide and deep as a lawn. About it were chairs and divans that would have satisfied a lotus-eater.

Cheever avoided proffers of conversation and pretended to read the magazines and newspapers. He kept his eyes on the doors. He did not want to take any one into his confidence, as he felt that, after all, Zada might have been out of her head. He did not want any seconds or bottle-holders. He was not afraid. Still, he did not care to be surprised by a mad bull. He felt that he could play toreador with neatness and despatch provided he could foresee the charge.

Among the magazines Cheever glanced at was one with an article on various modes of self-defense, jiu-jitsu, and other devices by which any clever child could apparently remove or disable a mad elephant. But Cheever's traditions did not incline to such methods. He had the fisting habit. He did not feel called toward clinching or choking, twisting, tripping, knifing, swording, or sandbagging. His wrath expressed itself, and gaily, in the play of the triceps muscle. For mobility he used footwork and headwork. For shield he had his forearms or his open hands—for weapons, the ten knuckles at the other end of the exquisite driving-shafts beginning in his shoulder-blades.

He had been a clever fighter from childhood. He had

been a successful boxer and had followed the art in its professional and amateur developments. He knew more of prize-ring history and politics than of any other. He often regretted that his inherited money had robbed him of a career as a heavy-weight. He was not so big as Dyckman, but he had made fools of bigger men. He felt that the odds were a trifle in his favor, especially if Dyckman were angry, as he must be to go roaring about town frightening one silly woman for another's sake.

He would have preferred not to fight in the club. It was the best of all possible clubs, and he supposed that he would be expelled for profaning its sacrosanctity with a vulgar brawl. But anything was better than cold feet.

Finally his hundredth glance at the door revealed Jim Dyckman. He was a long way off, but he looked bigger than Cheever remembered him. Also he was calmer than Cheever had hoped him to be, and not drunk, as he half expected.

Dyckman caught sight of Cheever, glared a moment, tossed his head as if it had antlers on it, and came forward grimly and swiftly.

A few members of the club spoke to him. An attendant or two, carrying cocktails or high-balls in or empty glasses out, stepped aside.

Dyckman advanced down the room, and his manner was challenge enough. But he paused honorably to say, "Cheever, I'm looking for you."

"So I hear."

"You had fair warning, then, from your—woman?"

"Which one?" said Cheever, with his irresistible impudence.

That was the fulminate that exploded Dyckman's wrath. "You blackguard!" he roared, and plunged. His left hand was out and open, his great right fist back. As he closed, it flashed past him and drove into the spot where Cheever's face was smirking.

But the face was gone. Cheever had bent his neck just

enough to escape the fist. He met the weight of Dyckman's rush with all his own weight in a short-arm jab that rocked Dyckman's whole frame and crumpled the white cuirass of his shirt.

The fight was within an ace of being ended then and there, but Dyckman's belly was covered with sinew, and he digested the bitter medicine. He tried to turn his huge grunt into a laugh. He was at least not to be guilty of assaulting a weakling.

Dyckman was a bit of a boxer, too. Like most rich men's sons, he was practised in athletics. The gentleman of our day carries no sword and no revolver; he carries his weapons in his gloves.

Dyckman acknowledged Cheever's skill and courage by deploying and falling back. He sparred a moment. He saw that Cheever was quicker than he at the feint and the sidestep.

He grew impatient at this dancing duet. His wrath was his worst enemy and Cheever's ally. Cheever taunted him, and he heard the voices of the club members who were rushing from their chairs in consternation, and running in from the other rooms, summoned by the wireless excitement that announces fights.

There was not going to be time for a bout, and the gallery was bigger than Dyckman had expected. He went in hell-for-leather. He felt a mighty satisfaction when his good left hand slashed through Cheever's ineffectual palms, reached that perky little mustache and smeared that amiable mouth with blood.

In the counterblow the edge of Cheever's cuff caught on Dyckman's knuckles and ripped the skin. This saved Dyckman's eye from mourning. And now wherever he struck he left a red mark. It helped his target-practice.

Cheever gave up trying to mar Dyckman's face and went for his waistcoat. All is fair in such a war, and below the belt was his favorite territory. He hoped to put Dyckman out. Dyckman tried to withhold his vul-

nerable solar plexus by crouching, but Cheever kept whizzing through his guard like a blazing pinwheel even when it brought his jaw in reach of an uppercut.

Dyckman clinched and tried to bear him down, but Cheever, reaching round him, battered him with the terrific kidney-blow, and Dyckman flung him off.

And now servants came leaping into the fray, venturing to lay hands on the men. They could hear older members pleading: "Gentlemen! Gentlemen! For God's sake remember where you are." One or two went calling, "House Committee!"

Such blows as were struck now were struck across other heads and in spite of other arms. Both men were seized at length and dragged away, petted and talked to like infuriated stallions. They stood panting and bleeding, trying not to hear the voices of reason. They glared at each other, and it became unendurable to each that the other should be able to stand erect and mock him.

As if by a signal agreed on, they wrenched and flung aside their captors and dashed together again, forgetting science, defense, caution, everything but the lust of carnage. Dyckman in freeing himself left his coat in the grasp of his retainers.

There is nothing more sickeningly thrilling than the bare-handed ferocity of two big men, all hate and stupid power, smashing and being smashed, trying to defend and destroy and each longing to knock the other lifeless before his own heart is stopped. It seemed a pity to interrupt it, and it was perilous as well.

For a long moment the two men flailed each other, bored in, and staggered out.

It was thud and thwack, slash and gouge. Wild blows went through the air like broadswords, making the spectators groan at what they might have done had they landed. Blows landed and sent a head back with such a snap that one looked for it on the floor. Flesh split, and blood spurted. Cheever reached up and swept his nose and

mouth clear of gore—then shot his reeking fist into Dyckman's heart as if he would drive it through.

It was amazing to see Dyckman's answering swing batter Cheever forward to one knee. Habit and not courtesy kept Dyckman from jumping him. He stood off for Cheever to regain his feet. It was not necessary, for Cheever's agility had carried him out of range, but the tolerance maddened him more than anything yet, and he ceased to duck and dodge. He stood in and battered at Dyckman's stomach till a gray nausea began to weaken his enemy. Dyckman grew afraid of a sudden blotting out of consciousness. He had known it once when the chance blow of an instructor had stretched him flat for thirty seconds.

He could not keep Cheever off far enough to use his longer reach. He forgot everything but the determination to make ruins of that handsome face before he went out. He knocked loose one tooth and bleared an eye, but it was not enough. Finally Cheever got to him with a sledge-hammer smash in the groin. It hurled Dyckman against and along the big table, just as he put home one magnificent, majestic, mellifluous swinge with all his body in it. It planted an earthquake under Cheever's ear.

Dyckman saw him go backward across a chair and spinning over it and with it and under it to the floor. Then he had only the faintness and the vomiting to fight. He made one groping, clutching, almighty effort to stand up long enough to crow like a victorious fighting cock, and he did. He stood up. He held to the table; he did not drop. And he said one triumphant, "Humph!"

And now the storm of indignation began. Dyckman was a spent and bankrupt object, and anybody could berate him. A member of the house committee reviled him with profanity and took the names of witnesses who could testify that Dyckman struck the first blow.

The pitiful stillness of Cheever, where a few men knelt about him, turned the favor to him. One little whiffet

told Dyckman to his face that it was a dastardly thing he had done. He laughed. He had his enemy on the floor. He did not want everything.

Dyckman made no answer to the accusations. He did not say that he was a crusader punishing an infidel for his treachery to a poor, neglected woman. He had almost forgotten what he was fighting for. He was too weak even to oppose the vague advice he heard that Cheever should be taken "home." He had a sardonic impulse to give Zada's address, but he could not master his befuddled wits enough for speech.

The little fussy rooster who called Dyckman dastardly said that he ought to be arrested. The reception he got for his proposal to bring a policeman into the club or take a member out of it into the jail and the newspapers was almost annihilating. The chairman of the house committee said:

"I trust that it is not necessary to say that this wretched and most unheard-of affair must be kept—unheard of. But I may say that I have here a list of the members present, and I shall make a list of the club servants present. If one word of this leaks out, each gentleman present will be brought before the council, and every servant will be discharged immediately—every servant without regard to guilt, innocence, or time of service."

Dyckman would have liked to spend the night at the club, but its hospitable air had chilled. He sent for his big coat, turned up the collar, pulled his hat low, and crept into a taxicab. His father and mother were out, and he got to his room without explanations. His valet, Dallam, gasped at the sight of him, but Dyckman laughed:

"You ought to see the other fellow."

Then he crept into the tub, thence into his bed, and slept till he was called to the telephone the next morning by Mrs. Cheever.

As he might have expected, Charity was as far as pos-

sible from gratitude. The only good news she gave him was that Cheever had been brought home half dead, terribly mauled, broken in pride, and weeping like a baby with his shame. Dyckman could not help swelling a little at that.

But when Charity told him that Cheever accused her of setting him on and swore that he would get even with them both, Dyckman realized that fists are poor poultices for bruises, and revenge the worst of all solutions. Finally, Charity denounced Jim and begged him once more to keep out of her sight and out of her life.

Dyckman was in the depths of the blues, and a note to the effect that he had been suspended from his club, to await action looking toward his expulsion, left him quite alone in the world.

In such a mood Kedzie Thropp called him up, with a cheery hail that rejoiced him like the first cheep of the first robin after a miserable winter. He said that he would call that evening, with the greatest possible delight. She said that she was very lonely for him, and they should have a blissful evening with just themselves together.

But it proved to be a rather crowded occasion in Kedzie's apartment. Her father and mother reached there before Dyckman did, to Kedzie's horror—and theirs.

CHAPTER XXXII

TURN a parable upside down, and nearly everything falls out of it.

Even the beautiful legend of the prodigal son returning home to his parents could not retain its value when it was topsy-turvied by the Thropps.

Their son was a daughter, but she had run away from them to batten on the husks of city life, and had prospered exceedingly. It was her parents who heard of her fame and had journeyed to the city to ask her forgiveness and throw themselves on her neck. Kedzie was now wonderful before the nation under the nom de film of Anita Adair; but if her father had not spanked her that fatal day in New York she might never have known glory. So many people have been kicked up-stairs in this world.

But Kedzie had not forgiven the outrage, and her father had no intention of reminding her how much she owed to it. In fact, he wished he had thought to cut off his right hand, scripturally, before it caused him to offend.

When the moving-picture patrons in Nimrim, Missouri, first saw Kedzie's pictures on the screen they were thrilled far beyond the intended effect of the thriller. The name "Anita Adair" had meant nothing, of course, among her old neighbors, but everybody had known Kedzie's ways ever since first she had had ways. Her image had no sooner walked into her first scene than fellows who had kissed her, and girls who had been jealous of her, began to buzz.

"Look, that's Kedzie."

"For mercy's sake, Kedzie Thropp!"

"Yep, that's old Throppie."

"Why—would you believe it?—that's old Ad Thropp's girl—the one what was lost so long."

In the Nimrim Nickeleum films were played twice of an evening. The seven-thirty audience was usually willing to go home and leave space for the nine-o'clock audience unless the night was cold. But on this immortal evening people were torn between a frenzy to watch Kedzie go by again and a frenzy to run and get Mr. and Mrs. Thropp.

A veritable Greek chorus ran and got the Thropps, and lost their seats. There was no room for the Thropps to get in. If the manager had not thrown out a few children and squeezed the parents through the crowd they would have lost the view.

The old people stood in the narrow aisle staring at the apotheosis of this brilliant creature in whose existence they had collaborated. They had the mythological experience of two old peasants seeing their child translated as in a chariot of fire. Their eyes were dazzled with tears, for they had mourned her as lost, either dead in body or dead of soul. They had imagined her drowned and floating down the Bay, or floating along the sidewalks of New York. They had feared for her the much-advertised fate of the white slaves—she might be bound out to Singapore or destined for Alaskan dance-halls. There are so many fates for parents to dread for their lost children.

To have their Kedzie float home to them on pinions of radiant beauty was an almost intolerable beatitude. Kedzie's mother started down the aisle, crying, "Kedzie, my baby! My little lost baby!" before Adna could check her.

Kedzie did not answer her mother, but went on with her work as if she were deaf. She came streaming from the projection-machine in long beams of light. This vivid, smiling, weeping, dancing, sobbing Kedzie was only

a vibration rebounding from a screen. Perhaps that is all any of us are.

One thing was certain: the Thropps determined to redeem their lost lamb as soon as they could get to New York. Their lost lamb was gamboling in blessed pastures. The Nimrim people spoke to the parents with reverence, as if their son had been elected President—which would not have been, after all, so wonderful as their daughter's being a screen queen.

There is no end to the astonishments of our every-day life. While the Thropps had been watching their daughter disport before them in a little dark room in Missouri, and other people in numbers of other cities were seeing her in duplicate, she herself was in none of the places, but in her own room—with Jim Dyckman paying court to her.

Kedzie was engaged in reeling off a new life of her own for the astonishment of the angels, or whatever audience it is for whose amusement the eternal movie show of mankind is performed. Kedzie's story was progressing with cinematographic speed and with transitions almost as abrupt as the typical five-reeler.

Kedzie was an anxious spectator as well as an actor in her own life film. She did not see how she could get out of the tangled situation her whims, her necessities, and her fates had constructed about her. She had been more or less forced into a betrothal with the wealthy Jim Dyckman before she had dissolved her marriage with Tommie Gilfoyle. She could not find Gilfoyle, and she grew frenzied with the dread that her inability to find him might thwart all her dreams.

Then came the evening when Jim Dyckman telephoned her that he could not keep his appointment with her. It was the evening he responded to Charity Coe's appeal and met Peter Cheever fist to fist. Kedzie heard, in the polite lie he told, a certain tang of prevarication, and that

frightened her. Why was Jim Dyckman trying to shake her? Once begun, where would the habit end?

That was a dull evening for Kedzie. She stuck at home without other society than her boredom and her terrors. She had few resources for the enrichment of solitude. She tried to read, but she could not find a popular novel or a short story in a magazine exciting enough to keep her mind off the excruciating mystery of the next instalment in her own life. Her heart ached with the fear that she might never know the majesty of being Mrs. Jim Dyckman. That almost royal prerogative grew more and more precious the more she feared to lose it. She imagined the glory with a ridiculous extravagance. Her theory of the life lived by the wealthy aristocrats was fantastic, but she liked it and longed for it.

The next day she waited to hear from Jim till she could endure the anxiety no longer. She ventured to call him at his father's home. She waited with trepidation while she was put through to his room, but his enthusiasm when he recognized her voice refreshed her hopes and her pride. She did not know that part of her welcome was due to the fierce rebuke Charity Coe had inflicted on him a little before because he had mauled her husband into a wreck.

That evening she waited for Jim Dyckman's arrival with an ardor almost akin to love. He had begged off from dinner. He did not explain that he carried two or three visible fist marks from Cheever's knuckles which he did not wish to exhibit in a public restaurant.

So Kedzie dined at home in solitary gloom. She had only herself for guest and found herself most stupid company.

She dined in her bathrobe and began immediately after dinner to dress for conquest. She hoped that Dyckman would take her out to the theater or a dance, and she put on her best bib and tucker, the bib being conspicuously missing. She was taking a last look at the arrangement

of her little living-room when the telephone-bell rang and the maid came to say:

"'Scuse me, Miss Adair, but hall-boy says your father and mother is down-stairs."

Kedzie almost fainted. She did not dare refuse to see them. She had not attained that indifference to the opinions of servants which is the only real emancipation from being the servant of one's servants.

While she fumbled with her impulses the maid rather stated than asked, "Shall I have 'em sent up, of course?"

"Of course," Kedzie snapped.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE Thropps knew Kedzie well enough to be afraid of her. A parental intuition told them that if they wrote to her she would be a long while answering; if they telephoned her she would be out of town. So they came unannounced. It had taken them the whole day to trace her. They learned with dismay that she was no longer "working" at the Hyperfilm Studio.

Adna Thropp and his wife were impressed by the ornate lobby of the apartment-house, by the livery of the hall-boy and the elevator-boy, by the apron and cap of the maid who let them in, and by the hall furniture.

But when they saw their little Kedzie standing before them in her evening gown—her party dress as Mrs. Thropp would say—they were overwhelmed. A daughter is a fearsome thing to a father, especially when she is grown up and dressed up. Adna turned his eyes away from his shining child.

But the sense of shame is as amenable to costume as to the lack of it, and Kedzie—the shoulder-revealer—was as much shocked by what her parents had on as they by what she had off.

The three embraced automatically rather than heartily, and Kedzie came out of her mother's bosom chilled, though it was a warm night and Mrs. Thropp had traveled long. Also there was a lot of her.

Kedzie gave her parents the welcome that the prodigal's elder brother gave him. She was thinking: "What will Jim Dyckman say when he learns that my real name is

Thropp and sees this pair of Thropps? They look as if their name would be Thropp."

Adna made the apologies—glad tidings being manifestly out of place.

"Hope we 'ain't put you out, daughter. We thought we'd s'prise you. We went to the fact'ry. Man at the door says you wasn't workin' there no more. Give us this address. Right nice place here, ain't it? Looks like a nice class of folks lived here."

Kedzie heard the rounded "r" and the flat "a" which she had discarded and scorned the more because she had once practised them. Children are generally disappointed in their parents, since they cherish ideals to which few parents may conform from lack of time, birth, breeding, or money. Kedzie was not in any mood for parents that night, anyway, but if she had to have parents, she would have chosen an earl and a countess with a Piccadilly accent and a concert-grand manner. Such parents it would have given her pleasure and pride to exhibit to Dyckman. They would awe-inspire him and arrange the marriage settlement, whatever that was.

But these poor old shabby dubs in their shabby duds—a couple who were plebeian even in Jayville! If there had not been such a popular prejudice against mauling one's innocent parents about, Kedzie would probably have taken her father and mother to the dumb-waiter and sent them down to the ash-can.

As she hung between despair and anxiety the telephone-bell rang. Jim Dyckman called her up to say that he was delayed for half an hour. Kedzie came back and invited her parents in. It made her sick to see their awkwardness among the furniture. They went like scows adrift. They priced everything with their eyes, and the beauty was spoiled by the estimated cost.

Mrs. Thropp asked Kedzie how she was half a dozen times, and, before Kedzie could answer, went on to tell about her own pains. Mr. Thropp was freshly alive to

the fact that New York's population is divided into two classes—innocent visitors and resident pirates.

While they asked Kedzie questions that she did not care to answer, and answered questions she had not cared to ask, Kedzie kept wondering how she could get rid of them before Dyckman came. She thanked Heaven that there was no guest-room in her apartment. They could not live with her, at least.

Suddenly it came over the pretty, bewildered little thing with her previous riddle of how to get rid of a last-year's husband so that she might get a new model—suddenly it came over Kedzie that she had a tremendous necessity for help, advice, parentage. The crying need for a father and a mother enhanced the importance of the two she had on hand.

She broke right into her mother's description of a harrowing lumbago she had suffered from: it was that bad she couldn't neither lay nor set—that is to say, comfortable. Kedzie's own new-fangled pronunciations and phrases fell from her mind, and she spoke in purest Nimrim:

"Listen, momma and poppa. I'm in a peck of trouble, and maybe you can help me out."

"Is it money?" Adna wailed, sepulchrally.

"No, unless it's too much of the darned stuff."

Adna gasped at the paradox. He had no time to comment before she assailed him with:

"You see, I've gone and got married."

This shattered them both so that the rest was only shrapnel after shell. But it was a leveling bombardment of everything near, dear, respectable, sacred. They were fairly rocked by each detonation of fact.

"Yes, I went and married a dirty little rat—name's Gilfoyle—he thinks my real name's Anita Adair. I got it out of a movie, first day I ran off from you folks. I had an awful time, momma—like to starved—would have, only for clerkin' in a candy-store. Then I got work

posin' for commercial photographers. Did you see the Breathasweeta Chewin' Gum Girl? No? That was me. Then I was a dancer for a while—on the stage—and—the other girls were awful cats. But what d'you expect? The life was terrible. We didn't wear much clo'es. That didn't affect me, though; some of those nood models are terribly respectable—not that I was nood, o' course. But—well—so I married Tommie Gilfoyle. I don't know how I ever came to. He must have mesmerized me, I guess."

"What did he work at?" said Adna.

"Poetry."

"Is poetry work?"

"Work? That's all it is. Poetry is all work and no pay. You should have seen that gink sweatin' over the fool stuff. He'd work a week for five dollars' worth of foolishness. And besides, as soon as he married me he lost his job."

"Poetry?" Adna mumbled.

"Advertising."

"Oh!"

"Well, we didn't live together very long, and I was perfectly miser'ble every minute."

"You poor little honey child!" said Mrs. Thropp, who felt her lamb coming back to her, and even Adna reached over and squeezed her hand and rubbed her knuckles with his rough thumb uncomfortably.

But it was good to have allies, and Kedzie went on:

"By an' by Gilfoyle got the offer of a position in Chicago, and he couldn't get there without borrowing all I had. But I was glad enough to pay it to him. I'd 'a' paid his fare to the moon if he'd 'a' gone there. Then I got a position with a moving-picture company—as a jobber—I began very humbly at first, you see, and I underwent great hardships." (She was quoting now from one of her favorite interviews.) "My talent attracted the attention of the director, Mr. Ferriday. He stands very high in the

p'fession, but he's very conceited—very! He thought he owned me because he was the first one I let direct me. He wanted me to marry him."

"Did you?" said Adna, who was prepared for anything.

"I should say not!" said Kedzie. "How could I, with a husband in Chicago? He wasn't much of a husband—just enough to keep me from marrying a real man. For one day, who should come to the studio but Jim Dyckman!"

"Any relation to the big Dyckmans?" said Adna.

"He's the son of the biggest one of them all," said Kedzie.

"And you know him?"

"Do I know him? Doesn't he want to marry me? Isn't that the whole trouble? He's coming here this evening."

To Adna, the humble railroad claim-agent, the careless tossing off of the great railroad name of Dyckman was what it would have been to a rural parson to hear Kedzie remark:

"I'm giving a little dinner to-night to my friends Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Mr. Apostle Paul."

When the shaken wits of the parents began to return to a partial calm they remembered that Kedzie had mentioned somebody named Gilfoyle—*Gargoyle* would have been a better name for him, since he grinned down in mockery upon a cathedral of hope.

Adna whispered, "When did you divorce—the other feller?"

"I didn't; that's the trouble."

"Why don't you?"

"I can't find him."

Adna spoke up: "I'll go to Chicago and find him and get a divorce, if I have to pound it out of him. You say he's a poet?"

Adna had the theory that poetry went with tatting and china-painting as an athletic exercise. Kedzie had no

reason to think differently. She had whipped her own poet, scratched him and driven him away in disorder. She told her people of this and of her inability to recall him, and of his failure to answer the letter she had sent to Chicago.

Her father and mother grew incandescent with the strain between the obstacle and the opportunity—the irresistible opportunity chained to the immovable obstacle. They raged against the fiend who had ruined Kedzie's life, met her on her pathway, gagged and bound her, and haled her to his lair.

Poor young Gilfoyle would have been flattered at the importance they gave him, but he would not have recognized himself or Kedzie.

According to his memory, he had married Kedzie because she was a pitiful, heartbroken waif who had lost her job and thrown herself on his mercy. He had married her because he adored her and he wanted to protect her and love her under the hallowing shelter of matrimony. He had given her his money and his love and his toil, and they had not interested her. She had berated him, chucked him, taken up with a fast millionaire; and when he returned to resume his place in her heart she had greeted him with her finger-nails.

Thus, as usual in wars, each side had bitter grievances which the other could neither acknowledge nor understand. Gilfoyle was as bitter against Kedzie as she was against him.

And even while the three Thropps were wondering how they could summon this vanquished monster out of the vasty deep of Chicago they could have found him by putting their heads out of the window and shouting his name. He was loitering opposite in the areaway of an empty residence. He did not know that Kedzie's father and mother were with her, any more than they knew that he was with them.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AFTER a deal of vain abuse of Gilfoyle for abducting their child and thwarting her golden opportunity, Adna asked at last, "What does Mr. Dyckman think of all this?"

"You don't suppose I've told him I was married, do you?" Kedzie stormed. "Do I look as loony as all that?"

"Oh!" said Adna.

"Why, he doesn't even know my name is Thropp, to say nothing of Thropp-hyphen-Gilfoyle."

"Oh!" said Adna.

"Who does he think you are?" asked Mrs. Thropp.

"Anita Adair, the famous favorite of the screen," said Kedzie, rather advertisingly.

"Hadn't you better tell him?" Adna ventured.

"I don't dast. He'd never speak to me again. He'd run like a rabbit if he thought I was a grass widow."

Mrs. Thropp remonstrated: "I don't believe he'd ever give you up. He must love you a heap if he wants to marry you."

"That's so," said Kedzie. "He's always begging me to name the day. But I don't know what he'd think if I was to tell him I'd been lying to him all this time. He thinks I'm an innocent little girl. I just haven't got the face to tell him I'm an old married woman with a mislaid husband."

"You mean to give him up, then?" Mrs. Thropp sighed.

Adna raged back: "Give up a billion-dollar man for a fool poet? Not on your tintype!"

Kedzie gave her father an admiring look. They were

getting on sympathetic ground. They understood each other.

Adna was encouraged to say: "If I was you, Kedzie, I'd just lay the facts before him. Maybe he could buy the feller off. You could probably get him mighty cheap."

Mrs. Thropp habitually resented all her husband's arguments. She scorned this proposal.

"Don't you do it, Kedzie. Just as you said, he'd most likely run like a rabbit."

"Then what am I going to do?" Kedzie whimpered.

There was a long silence. Mrs. Thropp pondered bitterly. She was the most moral of women. She had brought up her children with all rigidity. She had abused them for the least dereliction. She had upheld the grimmest standard of virtue, with "Don't!" for its watchword. Of virtue as a warm-hearted, alert, eager, glowing spirit, cultivating the best and most beautiful things in life, she had no idea. Virtue was to her a critic, a satirist, a neighborhood gossip, something scathing and ascetic. That delicate balance between failing to mind one's own business and failing to respond to another's need did not bother her—nor did that theory of motherhood which instils courage, independence, originality, and enthusiasm for life, and starts children precociously toward beauty, love, grace, philanthropy, invention, art, glory.

She had the utmost contempt for girls who went right according to their individualities, or went wrong for any reason soever. The least indiscretions of her own daughters she visited with endless tirades. Kedzie had escaped them for a long while. She had succeeded as far as she had because she had escaped from the most dangerous of all influences—a perniciously repressive mother. She would have been scolded viciously now if it had not been for Dyckman's mighty prestige.

The Dyckman millions in person were about to enter this room. The Dyckman millions wanted Kedzie. If

they got her it would be a wonderful thing for a poor, hard-working girl who had had the spunk to strike out for herself and make her own way without expense to her father and mother. The Dyckman millions, furthermore, would bring the millennium at once to the father and mother.

Mrs. Thropp, fresh from her village (yet not so very fresh—say, rather, recent from sordid humility), sat dreaming of herself as a Dyckman by marriage. She imagined herself and the great Mrs. Dyckman in adjoining rocking-chairs, exchanging gossip and recipes and anecdotes of their joint grandchildren-to-be. Just to inhale the aroma of that future, that vision of herself as Mr. Dyckman's mother-in-law, was like breathing in deeply of laughing-gas; a skilful dentist could have extracted a molar from her without attracting her attention. And in the vapor of that stupendous temptation the devil actually did extract from her her entire moral code without her noticing the difference.

If Kedzie had been married to Gilfoyle and besought in marriage by another fellow of the same relative standard of income Mrs. Thropp could have waxed as indignant as anybody. If Kedzie's new suitor had earned as high as four thousand a year, which was a pile of money in Nimrim, she would still have raged against the immorality of tampering with the sacrament of marriage. She might have withstood as much as twenty thousand a year for the sake of home and religion. She abhorred divorce, as well as other people do (especially divorcées).

But to resist a million dollars and all that went with it was impossible. To resist a score of millions was twenty times impossibler. She made up her mind that Dyckman should not escape from this temporary alliance with the Thropps without paying at least a handsome initiation-fee. Suddenly she set her jaw and broke into the parley of her husband and their daughter:

"Well, I've made up my mind. Adna, you shut up

awhile and get on out this room. I'm going to have a few words with my girl."

Adna looked into the face of his wife and saw there that red-and-white-striped expression which always puts a wise man to flight. He was glad to be permitted to retreat. When he was gone Mrs. Thropp beckoned Kedzie to sit by her on the *chaise longue*. She gathered her child up as some adoring old buzzard might cuddle her nestling and impart choice ideals of scavengery.

"Look here, honey: you listen to your mother what loves you and knows what's best for you. You've struck out for yourself and you've won the grandest chance any girl ever had. If you throw it away you'll be slappin' Providence right in the face. The Lord would never have put this op'tunity in your reach if He hadn't meant you to have it."

"What you talking about, momma?" said Kedzie.

"My father always used to say: 'Old Man Op'tunity is bald-headed except for one long scalplock in the middle his forehead. Grab him as he comes toward you, for there's nothing to lay holt on as he goes by.'"

"What's all this talk about bald-heads?" Kedzie protested.

"Hush your mouth and listen to a woman that's older 'n what you are and knows more. Look at me! I've slaved all my life. I've been a hard-workin', church-goin' woman, a good mother to a lot of ungrateful children, a faithful, lovin' wife—and what have I got for it? Look at me. Do you want to be like me when you get my age? Do you?"

It was a hard question to answer politely, so Kedzie said nothing. Mrs. Thropp went on:

"You got a chance to look like me and live hard and die poor, and that's what 'll happen if you stick by this low-life, good-for-nothing dawg you married. Don't do it. Money's come your way. Grab it quick. Hold on to it tight. Money's the one thing that counts. You take

my word for it. It don't matter much how you get it; the main thing is Get it! People don't ask you How? but How Much? If you got enough they don't care How."

"That's all right enough," said Kedzie, "but the main question with me is How?"

"How is easy," said Mrs. Thropp, and her face seemed to turn yellow as she lowered her voice. "This Mr. Dyckman is crazy about you. He wants you. If he's willin' to marry you to get you, I guess he'll be still more willin' to get you without marryin' you."

"Why, momma!"

It was just a whisper. Kedzie had lived through village perils and city perils; she had been one of a band of dancers as scant of morals as of clothes; she had drifted through all sorts of encounters with all sorts of people; but she had never heard so terrible a thought so terribly expressed. She flinched from her mother. Her mother saw that shudder of retreat and grew harsher:

"You tell Mr. Dyckman about your husband, and you'll lose him. You will—for sure! If you lose him, you lose the greatest chance a girl ever had. Take him—and make him pay for you!—in advance. Do you understand? You can't get much afterward. You can get a fortune if you get your money first. Look at you, how pretty you are! He'd give you a million if you asked him. Get your money; then tell him if you want to; but don't lose this chance. Do you hear me?"

"Yes," Kedzie sighed. "Yes, momma."

"Promise me on your solemn honor!"

Kedzie giggled with sheer nervousness at the phrase. But she would not promise.

The door-bell rang, and the maid admitted Jim Dyckman, who had not paused to send his name up by the telephone. While he gave his hat and stick to the maid and peeled off his gloves Kedzie was whispering:

"It's Jim."

Mrs. Thropp struggled to her feet. "He mustn't find me here," she said. "Don't tell him about us."

But before she could escape Dyckman was in the doorway, almost too tall to walk through it, almost as tall as twenty million dollars.

To Mrs. Thropp he was as majestic as the Colossus of Rhodes would have been. Like the Colossus of Rhodes, he was a gilded giant.

CHAPTER XXXV

KEDZIE was paralyzed. Mrs. Thropp was inspired. Unity of purpose guided her true. She had told her daughter to ignore Gilfoyle as an unimportant detail. She certainly did not intend to substitute a couple of crude parents as a new handicap.

No one knew Mrs. Thropp's cheapness of appearance better than she did. A woman may grow shoddy and careless, but she rarely grows oblivious of her uncomeliness. She will rather cherish it as the final cruelty of circumstances. Mrs. Thropp was keenly alive to the effect it would have on Dyckman if Kedzie introduced her and Adna as the encumbrances on her beauty.

Adna, hearing the door-bell and Dyckman's entrance, returned to the living-room from the bathroom, where he had taken refuge. He stood in the hall now behind the puzzled Dyckman.

There was a dreadful silence for a moment. Jim spoke, shyly:

"Hello, Anita! How are you?"

"Hello, Jim!" Kedzie stammered. "This is—"

"I'm the janitor's wife," said Mrs. Thropp. "My husband had to come up to see about the worter not running in the bathroom, and I came along to see Miss—the young lady. She's been awful good to me. Well, I'll be gettin' along. Good night, miss. Good night, sir."

To save herself, she could not think of Kedzie's screen name. To save her daughter's future, she disowned her. She pushed past Dyckman, and silencing the stupefied Adna with a glare, swept him out through the dining-room into the kitchen.

It amazed Mrs. Thropp to find a kitchen so many flights up-stairs. The ingenuity of the devices, the step-saving cupboard, the dry ice-box with its coils of cold-air pipes, the gas-stove, the electric appliances, were like wonderful new toys to her.

Adna was as comfortable as a cow in a hammock, and she would have sent him away, but his hat was in the hall and she dared not go for it. Besides, she wanted to wait long enough to learn the outcome of Kedzie's adventure with Dyckman.

As soon as he was alone with Kedzie, Jim had taken her into his arms. She blushed with an unwonted timidity in a new sense of the forbiddenness of her presence there.

Her upward glance showed her that Jim had been in trouble, too. His jaw had a mottled look, and one eyebrow was a trifle mashed.

"What on earth has happened to you?" she gasped.

"Oh, I had a little run-in with a fellow."

"What about?" said Kedzie.

"Nothing much."

"He must have hurt you terribly."

"Think so? Well, you ought to see him."

"What was it all about?"

"Oh, just a bit of an argument."

"Who was he?"

"Nobody you know."

"You mean it's none of my business?"

"I wouldn't put it that way, honey. I'd just rather not talk about it."

Kedzie felt rebuffed and afraid. He had spent an evening away from her and had reappeared with scars from a battle he would not describe. She would have been still more terrified if she had known that he had fought as the cavalier of Charity Coe Cheever. She would have been somewhat reassured if she had known that Jim smarted less under the bruises of Cheever's fists than under

the rebuke he had had from Charity for his interference in her marital crisis.

Jim was the more in need of Kedzie's devotion for being discarded again by Charity. The warmth in Kedzie's greeting was due to her fear of losing him. But he did not know that. He only knew that she was exceedingly cordial to him, and it was his nature to repay cordiality with usury.

He noted, however, that Kedzie's warmth had an element of anxiety. He asked her what was worrying her, but she would not answer.

At length he made his usual remark. It had become a sort of standing joke for him to say, "When do we marry?"

She always answered, "Give me a little more time." But to-night when he laughed, "Well, just to get the subject out of the way, when do we marry?" Kedzie did not make her regular answer. Her pretty face was suddenly darkened with pain. She moaned: "Never, I guess. Never, I'm afraid."

"What's on your mind, Anita?"

She hesitated, but when he repeated his query she took the plunge and told him the truth.

Her mother had pleaded just a little too well. If Mrs. Thropp had begged Kedzie to do the right thing for the right's sake Kedzie would have felt the natural reaction daughters feel toward motherly advice. But the entreaty to do evil that evil might come of it aroused even more resistance, issuing as it did from maternal lips that traditionally give only holy counsel. It had a more reforming effect on Kedzie's crooked plans than all the exhortations of all the preachers in the world could have had.

Kedzie turned to honesty because it seemed the less horrible of two evils. She assumed the rôle of a little penitent, and made Jim Dyckman a father confessor. She told her story as truthfully as she could tell it or feel it. She was too sincere to be just.

She made herself the martyr that she felt herself to be. She wept plentifully and prettily, with irresistible gulps and swallowings of lumps and catches of breath, fetches of sobs, and dartings and gleamings of pearls from her shining eyelids. Her handkerchief was soon a little wad of wet lace, ridiculously pathetic; her lips were blubbered. She wept on and on till she just had to blow her little red nose. She blew it with exquisite candor, and it gave forth the heartbreaking squawk of the first toy trumpet a child breaks of a Christmas morning.

One radical difference between romance and realism is that in romance the heroines weep from the eyelashes out; in realism, some of the tears get into the nostrils. In real life it is reality that moves our hearts, and Dyckman was convinced by Kedzie's realism.

She did not need to tell him of her humble and Western birth. He had recognized her accent from the first, and forgiven it. He knew a little of her history, because Charity Coe had sent him to the studio to look her up, reminding him that she had been the little dancer he pulled out of Mrs. Noxon's pool.

At length Kedzie revealed the horrible fact that her real name was Kedzie Thropp. He laughed aloud. He was so tickled by her babyish remorse that he made her say it again. He told her he loved it twice as well as the stilted, stagy "Anita Adair."

"That's one of the reasons I wanted you to marry me," he said, "so that I could change your horrible name."

"But I changed it myself first," Kedzie howled; and now the truth came ripping. "The day after you pulled me out of the pool at Newport I—I—married a fellow named Tommie Gilfoyle."

Dyckman's smile was swept from his face; his chuckle ended in a groan. Kedzie's explanation was a little different from the one she gave her parents. Unconsciously she tuned it to her audience. It grew a trifle more literary.

"What could I do? I was alone in the world, without friends or money or position. He happened to be at the railroad station. He saw how frightened I was, and he had loved me for a long time. He begged me to take mercy on him and on myself, and marry him. He offered me his protection; he said I should be his wife in name only until I learned to love him. And I was alone in the world, without friends or money—but I told you that once, didn't I?"

Dyckman was thinking hard, aching hard. He mumbled, "What became of him?"

"When he saw that I couldn't love him he took some money I had left from my earnings and abandoned me. I had a desperate struggle to get along, and then I got my chance in the moving pictures, and I met you there—and—learned what love is—too late—too late!"

Dyckman broke in on her lyric grief, "What became of the man you married?"

"He never came near me till awhile ago. He saw my pictures on the screen and thought I must be making a big lot of money. He came here and tried to sneak back into my good graces. He even tried to kiss me, and I nearly tore his eyes out."

"Why?" Jim asked.

"Because I belong to nobody but you—at least, I did belong to nobody but you. But now you won't want me any more. I don't blame you for hating me. I hate myself. I've deceived you, and you'll never believe me again, or love me, or anything."

She wept ardently, for she was appalled by the magnitude of her deception, now that it stood exposed. She had no idea of the magnitude of Dyckman's chivalry. She slipped to the floor and laid her head on his knee.

It was Dyckman's nature to respond at once to any appeal to his sympathy or his courtesy. Automatically his heart warmed toward human distress. He felt a deeper interest in Kedzie than before, because she threw

herself on his mercy as never before. His hand went out to her head and fell upon her hair with a kind of apostolic benediction. He poured, as it were, an ointment of absolution and acceptance upon her curls.

She felt in his very fingers so much reassurance that she was encouraged to unburden herself altogether of her hoard of secrets.

"There's one more awful thing you'll never forgive me for, Jim. I want to tell you that, and then you'll know all the worst of me. My father and mother came to town to-day, and—and that was my mother who said she was the janitor's wife."

"Why did she do that?" said Jim.

"I had been telling them how much I loved you, and poor dear mother was afraid you might be scared away if you knew how poor my people are."

"What kind of a ghastly snob do they take me for?" Jim growled.

"They don't know you as I do," said Kedzie; "but even I can't expect you to forgive everything. I've lied to you about everything except about loving you, and I was a long while telling you the truth about that. But now you know all there is to know about me, and I wouldn't blame you for despising me. Of course I don't expect you to want to marry me any longer, so I'll give you back your beautiful engagement ring."

With her arms across his knees, one of her delicate hands began to draw from the other a gold circlet knobbed with diamonds.

"Don't do that," Jim said, taking her hands in his. "The engagement stands."

"But how can it, darling?" said Kedzie. "You can't love me any more."

"Of course I do, more and more."

"But you can never marry me, and surely you don't want—"

Suddenly she ran plump into the situation her mother

had imagined and encouraged. She blushed at the collision with it, and became a very allegory of innocence confronted with abhorrent evil.

"Of course I don't," said Dyckman, divining exactly what she meant. "I'll find this Gilfoyle and buy him up or beat him to a pulp."

Kedzie lifted her downcast eyes in gratitude for such a godlike resolution. But before she could cry out in praise of it she cried out in terror.

For right before her stood the long-lost Gilfoyle.

CHAPTER XXXVI

DURING his long wait this evening Gilfoyle had grown almost uncontrollable with impatience to undertake the assault. His landlady had warned him not to return to his room until he brought some cash on account. He was for making the charge the moment he saw Jim Dyckman enter the building, but Connery insisted on giving Dyckman time to get forward with his courtship. They had seen the maid come out of the servants' entrance and hurry up the street to the vain tryst Connery had arranged with her to get her out of the way.

At length, when time had passed sufficiently, they had crossed to the apartment-house and told the elevator-boy they were expected by the tenants above. He took them up without question. They pretended to ring the bell there, waited for the elevator to disappear, then walked down a flight of steps and paused at the fatal sill.

Connery inserted the key stealthily into the lock, turned it, opened the door in silence, and let Gilfoyle slip through. He followed and closed the door without shock.

They heard Kedzie's murmurous tones and the rumble of Dyckman's answer. Then Gilfoyle strode forward. He saw Kedzie coiled on the floor with her elbows on Dyckman's knees. He caught her eye, and her start of bewilderment held him spellbound a moment. Then he cried:

"There you are! I've got you! You faithless little beast."

Dyckman rose to an amazing height, lifted Kedzie to her feet, and answered:

"Who the devil are you, and what the devil do you want?"

"I'm the husband of that shameless woman; that's who I am," Gilfoyle shrilled, a little cowed by Dyckman's stature.

"Oh, you are, are you!" said Dyckman. "Well, you're the very chap I'm looking for. Come in, by all means."

Connery, seeing that the initiative was slipping from Gilfoyle's flaccid hand, pushed forward with truculence.

"None of that, you big bluff! You needn't think you can put anything over on me."

"And who are you?" said Dyckman.

"I'm Connery the detective, and I've got the goods on you."

He advanced on Dyckman, and Gilfoyle came with him. Gilfoyle took courage from the puzzled confusion of Dyckman, and he poured forth invectives.

"You think because you're rich you can go around breaking up homes and decoying wives away, do you? Not that she isn't willing enough to be decoyed! I wasn't good enough for her. She had to sell herself for money and jewelry and a gay time! I ought to kill you both, and maybe I will; but first I'm going to show you up in the newspapers."

"Oh, you are, are you!" was the best that Dyckman could improvise.

"Yes, he is," Connery roared. "I'm a newspaper man, and your name's worth head-lines in every paper in the country. And I'll see that it gets there, too. It will go on the wires to-night unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you come across with—"

"Oh, that's it, is it!" said Dyckman. "Just a little old-fashioned blackmail!"

He had tasted the joys of violence in his bout with Cheever, and now he had recourse to it again. His long arms went out swiftly toward the twain of his assailants.

His big hands cupped their heads as if they were melons, and he knocked their skulls together smartly.

He might have battered them to death, but he heard Kedzie's little cry of horror, and forbore. He flung the heads from him, and the bodies followed limply. Connery went to the floor, and Gilfoyle sprawled across a chair. They were almost unconscious, their brains reduced to swirling nebulæ.

Kedzie thought for a moment that she and ner love-affairs had brought about a double murder. She saw herself becoming one of those little women who appear with an almost periodic regularity in the annals of crime, and whose red smiles drag now this, now that great family's name into the mud and vomit of public nausea.

She would lose Jim Dyckman, after all, and ruin him in the losing. She clung to his arm to check him in his work of devastation. He, too, stood wondering at the amazing deed of his rebellious hands, and wondering what the result would be.

He and Kedzie rejoiced at seeing the victims move. Connery began to squirm on the floor and get to his wabbly knees, and Gilfoyle writhed back to consciousness with wits a-flutter.

There was a silence of mutual attention for a while. Connery was growling from all-fours like a surly dog:

"I'll get you for this—you'll see! You'll be sorry for this."

This restored Dyckman's temper to its throne. He seized Connery by the scruff of his coat, jerked him to his feet, and snarled at him:

"Haven't you had enough, you little mucker? You threaten me or Miss Adair again and I'll not leave enough of you to—to—"

He was not apt at phrases, but Connery felt metaphors enough in the size of the fist before his nose. He put up his hands, palms forward, in the ancient gesture of surrender.

Then Gilfoyle turned cry-baby and began to sob.

"You call her Miss Adair! But she's my wife. Mrs. Gilfoyle is what she is, and you've taken her away from me. This is a rotten country, and you rotten millionaires can do nearly anything you want to—but not quite. You'll find that out. There are still a few courts and a few newspapers you can't muzzle."

Dyckman advanced against him, but Gilfoyle merely clung to the back of his chair, and his non-resistance was his best shelter. It was impossible for Dyckman to strike him. Secure in his helplessness, he took full advantage of the tyranny of impotence. He rose to his feet and went on with his lachrymose philippic.

"You're going to pay for what you've done, and pay high!"

The one thing that restrained Dyckman from offering to buy him out was that he demanded purchase. Like most rich people, Dyckman was the everlasting target of prayers and threats. He could be generous to an appeal, but a demand locked his heart.

He answered Gilfoyle's menace, bluntly, "I'll pay you when hell freezes over, and not a cent before."

"Well, then, you stand from under," Gilfoyle squealed. "There's a law in this State against home-wreckers like you, and I can send you to the penitentiary for breaking it."

Dyckman's rage blackened again; he caught Gilfoyle by the shoulder and roared: "You foul-mouthed, filthy-minded little sneak! You say a word against your wife and I'll throw you out of the window. She's too decent for you to understand. You get down on your knees and ask her pardon."

He forced Gilfoyle to his knees, but he could not make him pray. And Kedzie fell back from him. She was afraid to pose as a saint worthy of genuflection. Connery re-entered the conflict with a sneer:

"Aw, tell it to the judge, Dyckman! Tell it to the

judge! See how good it listens to him. We'll tell him how we found you here; and you tell him you were holding a prayer-meeting. You didn't want to be disturbed, so you didn't have even a servant around—all alone together at this hour."

Then a new, strange voice spoke in.

"Who said they were alone?"

The four turned to see Mrs. Thropp filling the hall doorway, and Adna's head back of her shoulder. It was really a little too melodramatic. The village lassie goes to the great city; her father and mother arrive in all their bucolic innocence just in time to save her from destruction.

Connery, whose climax she had spoiled, though she had probably saved his bones, gasped, "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm this child's mother; that's who I am. And that's her father. And what's more, we've been here all evening, and you'd better look out how you swear at me or I'll sick Mr. Dyckman on you."

If there are gallery gods in heaven, and angels with a melodramatic taste (as there must be, for how else could we have acquired it?), they must have shaken the cloudy rafters with applause. Only one touch was needed to perfect the scene, and that was for the *First* and *Second Villains* to slink off, cursing and muttering, "Foiled again!"

But these villains were not professionals, and they had not been rehearsed. They were like childish actors in a juvenile production at five pins per admission. An unexpected line threw them into complete disorder.

Connery turned to Gilfoyle. "Did you ever lamp this old lady before?"

Gilfoyle answered, stoutly enough, "I never laid eyes on her."

Connery was about to order Mrs. Thropp out of the room as an impostor, but she would not be denied her retort.

"O' course he never laid eyes on me. If he had have

he'd never tried to pull the wool over that innocent baby's eyes; and if I'd ever laid eyes on him I'd have run him out of the country before I'd ever have let my child look at him a second time."

Connery made one last struggle: "What proof have you got that you're her mother?"

"Ask my husband here."

"What good is his word in such a matter?"

Connery did not mean this as in any sense a reflection on Mrs. Thropp's marital integrity, but she took it so. Now, in Nimrim the question of fidelity is not dealt with lightly, at least in repartee. Mrs. Thropp emitted a roar of scandalized virtue and would have attacked the young men with her fists if her husband, who should have attacked them in her stead, had not clung to her, murmuring:

"Now, momma, don't get excited. You young fellers better vamoose quick. I can't holt her very long."

So they vamosed and were much obliged for the opportunity, leaving Kedzie to fling her arms about her mother with spontaneous filial affection, and to present Dyckman to her with genuine pride.

Dyckman had been almost as frightened as Kedzie. He had been more afraid of his own temper than of his assailants, but afraid enough of their shadowy powers. Mrs. Thropp would have had to be far less comely than she was to be unwelcome. She had the ultimate charm of perfect timeliness. He greeted her with that deference he paid to all women, and she adored him at once, independently of his fortune.

Adna said that he had always been an admirer of the old Dyckman and was glad to meet his boy, being as he was a railroad man himself, in a small way. He rather gave the impression that he was at least a third vice-president, but very modest about it.

Mrs. Thropp gleaned from the first words that Kedzie had gone contrary to her advice and had told Dyckman the truth. She took the credit calmly.

"I come on East to clear things up, and I advised my daughter to tell you just the way things were—as I always say to my children, use the truth and shame the devil."

Kedzie was too busy to notice the outrage. She was thanking Heaven for her impulse to reveal the facts, realizing how appalling it would have been if Gilfoyle had been the first to inform Dyckman.

They were all having a joyous family party when it suddenly came over them that Gilfoyle had once more appeared and resubmerged. But Dyckman said: "I'll find him for you, and I'll buy him. He'll be cheap at any price."

He bade good night early and went to his own home, carrying a backload of trouble. He was plainly in for it. Whatever happened, he was the scapegoat-elect.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE villain in melodrama is as likely as not to be as decent a fellow as any. When he slinks from the stage in his final hissed exit he goes to his dressing-room, scours off his grease-paint, and probably returns to his devoted family or seats himself before a bowl of milk-and-crackers in his club.

Gilfoyle was as decent a fellow as ever villain was. Circumstances and not himself cast him in an evil rôle, and as actors know, once so established, it is almost impossible to return to heroic parts. Gilfoyle could not even remove his grease-paint. He could not go back to his dressing-room, for his landlady had told him that the only key to her front door was cash. He had gone out to bring home a millionaire, and he had achieved nothing but a headache and a moral cataclysm.

He hardly knew how he escaped from the apartment-house. The dark cool of the street brought him into the night of things. It came upon him like a black fog what he had tried to do. The bitter disgrace of a man who has been whipped in a fight was his, but other disgraces were heaped upon it. For the first time he saw himself as Kedzie saw him.

He had neglected his wife till she grew famous in spite of him. He had gone back to her to share her bounty. When she repulsed him he had entered into a conspiracy to spy on her. He had waited impatiently for a rich man to compromise her, so that he could surprise them in guilt and extort money from them.

He had not warned the girl of her danger from the other

man or from himself. He had not pleaded with her to be good, had not asked her to come back to honeymoon again in poverty with him; he had preferred to live on borrowed money and on unpaid board while he fooled with verses and refused the manual tasks that waited everywhere about the busy city. He might have cleaned the streets or earned a decent living handling garbage in the city scows. But he had preferred to speculate in blackmail and play the badger-game with his wife as an unwitting accomplice. He had hated millionaires, and counted them all criminals deserving spoliation, but he felt that he had sunk lower than the millionaires.

The remembrance of Kedzie haunted him. She had been supremely beautiful to-night, frightened into greater beauty than ever. She was afraid of him who should have been her refuge, and she hid for protection behind the man who should have seemed her enemy.

He recalled her as she was when he first loved her, the pretty little candy-store clerk, the lissome, living marble in her Greek tunic, the quaint, sweet girl who came to him in the Grand Central Terminal, lugging her suit-case, the shy thing at the License Bureau, the ineffably exquisite bride he had made his wife. He saw her at the gas-stove and loved her very petulance and the pretty way she banged the oven door and pouted at fate.

The lyrics he had written to her sang through his aching head. He was wrung to anguish between the lover and the poet he had meant to be, and the spurned and hated cur he had become. He stumbled along the street at Connery's side, whispering to himself, while his earliest verses to Kedzie ran in and out through his thoughts like a catchy tune:

> Pretty maid, pretty maid, may I call you Anita?
> Your last name is sweet, but your first name is sweeter.

He recalled the sonnets he had begun which were to make them both immortal. He regretted the spitefulness

that had led him to write in another name than hers because she had refused to support him. He had been a viler beast than the cutpurse poet of old France, without the lilies of verse that bloom pure white above the dunghill of Villon's life.

Gilfoyle's soul went down into a hell of regret and wriggled in the flames of self-condemnation. He grew maudlin with repentance and clung to his friend Connery with odious garrulity. Connery was disgusted with him, but he was afraid to leave him because he kept sighing:

"I guess the river's the only place for me now."

At length Connery steered him into a saloon for medicine and bought him a stiff bracer of whisky and vermouth. But it only threw Gilfoyle into deeper befuddlement. He was like Charles Lamb, in that a thimbleful of alcohol affected him as much as a tumbler another. He wanted to tell his troubles to the barkeeper, and Connery had to drag him away.

In the hope that a walk in the air might help to steady him, Connery set out toward his own boarding-house. They started across Columbus Avenue under the pillars of the Elevated tracks.

Habituated to the traffic customs, the New-Yorker crossing a street looks to the left for traffic till he gets halfway across, then looks to the right for traffic bound in the opposite direction. Connery led Gilfoyle to the middle of the avenue, paused for a south-bound street-car to go banging by them, darted back of it and looked to the right for a north-bound car or motor. But a taxicab trying to pass the south-bound car was shooting south along the north-bound tracks.

Connery saw it barely in time to jump back. He yanked Gilfoyle's arm, but Gilfoyle had plunged forward. He might have escaped if Connery had let him go. But the cab struck him, hurled him in air against an iron pillar, caught him on the rebound and ran him down. Kedzie Thropp was a widow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

DEATHS from the wheeled torpedoes that shoot along the city streets are too monotonously numerous to make a stir in the newspapers unless the victims have some other claim on the public attention.

Gilfoyle had been writing advertisements of other people's wares, but nobody was going to pay for the advertisement of him. The things that he might have become were even more obscure than the things he was. The pity of his taking-off would have had no more record than a few lines of small type, but for one further accident.

The taxicab-driver whose reckless haste had sent him down the wrong side of the street had been spurred on by the reckless haste of his passenger. The pretty Mrs. Twyford had been for years encouraging the reporters to emphasize her social altitude, and had seen that they obtained her photographs at frequent intervals. But on this night she had gone up-town upon one of the few affairs for which she did not wish publicity. She had learned by telephone that her husband had returned to New York unexpectedly, and she was intensely impatient to be at home when he got there.

When her scudding taxicab solved all of Gilfoyle's earthly problems in one fierce erasure she made such efforts to escape from the instantly gathered crowd that she attracted the attention of the policeman who happened to be at the next corner. He proceeded to take the name and addresses of witnesses and principals, and he detained her as an important accessory.

Connery was one of the news-men who had been in-

debted to Mrs. Twyford for many a half-column of gossip, and he recognized her at once. He was a reporter, first, last, and all the time, and he was very much in need of something to sell.

He was greatly shattered by the annihilation of his friend, but his instinctive journalism led him to control himself long enough to call Mrs. Twyford by name and assure the policeman that she was a lady of high degree who should not be bothered

Neither the policeman nor Mrs. Twyford thanked him. They were equally rude to him and to each other. Connery thought the incident might interest the night city editor of his paper, and so he telephoned a good story in to the office as soon as he had released himself from the inquisition and had seen an ambulance carry poor Gilfoyle away.

Mrs. Twyford reached home too late, and in such a state of nerves that she made the most unconvincing replies to the cross-examination that ensued. When she saw her name in the paper the next morning her friends also began to make inquiries—and eventually to deny that they were her friends or had ever been.

It was her name in the heavy type that caught the heavy eyes of Jim Dyckman at breakfast the next morning. It was thus that he came upon the fate of Thomas Gilfoyle, whose death had been the cause of all this pother.

Before he could telephone Anita—or Kedzie, as he mentally corrected himself—he was informed that a Mr. Connery was at the door, asking for him. He nodded and went into the library, carrying the newspaper with him.

Connery grinned sadly and mumbled: "I see you've seen it. I thought you'd like to know about it."

"I should," said Dyckman. "Sit down."

Connery sat down and told of the accident and what led up to it. He spoke in a lowered voice and kept his eye on the door. When he had finished his story he said, "Now, of course this all comes out very convenient for

you, but I suppose you see how easy it would be for me to tell what I know, and that mightn't be so convenient for you."

"Are you beginning your blackmail again so early in the morning?"

"Cut out that kind of talk or there's nothing doing," said Connery. "I can make a lot of trouble for you, and I can hush up a lot. Unless I speak I don't suppose anybody else is going to peep about Miss Adair being Mrs. Gilfoyle, and about Mr. Dyckman being interested in his wife. If I do speak it would take a lot of explaining."

"I am not afraid of explaining to the whole world that Miss Adair is a friend of mine and that her father and mother were present when I called."

Connery met this with a smile. "But how often were they present when you called?"

Dyckman grew belligerent again: "Do you want me to finish what I began on you last night?"

"I'm in no hurry, thank you. You can outclass me in the ring, but it wouldn't help you much to beat me up, would it?—or Miss Adair, either. She's got some rights, hasn't she?"

"Has she any that you are capable of respecting?"

"Sure she has. I don't want to cause the little lady any inconvenience. She and Tommie Gilfoyle didn't belong together, anyway. She was through with him long ago, and the only thing that saved his face was the fact that he's dead—poor fellow!

"But you see I've got to appear as a witness in the trial of the taxicab-driver, who'll be held for manslaughter or something. If I say that Gilfoyle and I had just come from a battle with you and that he got the wits knocked out of him because he accused you of making a mistress out of his wife—"

"Be careful!"

"The same to you, Mr. Dyckman."

Dyckman felt himself nettled. Kedzie's silence about

the existence of a husband had enmeshed him. He would not attempt to justify himself. It would do no good to thresh about. The big gladiator sat still waiting for the *retiarius* to finish him. But Connery's voice grew merciful. It was a luxury beyond price to extend an alms to this plutocrat.

"What I'm getting at, Mr. Dyckman," he resumed, "is this: Tommie owed some money to his landlady. He owed me some money that I could use. He's got a mother and father up-State. He told me he'd never told them about his marriage. They'll want him back, I suppose. From what he's told me, it would be a real hardship for them to pay the funeral expenses. You could pay all that, and you could even say that he had a little money in the bank and send that along with him, and never know the difference. But they would."

"I see," said Dyckman, very solemnly.

"You called me some rough names, Mr. Dyckman, and I guess I earned 'em. Looking things over the morning after, I'm not so stuck on myself as I was, but you stack up pretty well. I like a man who can use his hands in an argument. My name is Connery, you know. What you did to me was a plenty, but it looks better to me now than it felt last night.

"You know a reporter just gets naturally hungry to see a man face a scandal in a manly way. If you had shown a yellow streak and tried to buy your way out I would have taken your money and thought I was doing a public service in getting it away from a quitter. But when you cracked my bean against poor Gilfoyle's you made me see a lot of things besides stars.

"There's nothing to be gained by keeping up this war. I want to put it all out of sight for your sake and for Gilfoyle's mother's sake, and for the sake of that pretty little Adair lady. I don't know what she's been or done, but she's pretty and she's got a nice, spunky mother.

"I'm a good newspaper man, Mr. Dyckman, and that

means I've kept quiet about even better stories than I've sprung. If I had a lot of money now I'd add this story to the list and treat Gilfoyle's folks right without giving you a look-in. But being dead-broke, I thought maybe you'd like to see things done in a decent manner. It's going to be hard enough for that old couple up-State to get Tommie back, as they've got to, without taking any excess heartbreak up in the baggage-car. Do you follow me?"

"I do," said Dyckman; and now he asked the "How much?" that he had refused to speak the night before.

Connery did a little figuring with a pencil, and Dyckman thought that some life-insurance in the mother's name would be a pleasant thing to add. Then he doubled the total, wrote a check for it, and said:

"There'll probably be something left over. I wish you'd keep it as your—attorney-fee, Mr. Connery."

They shook hands as they parted.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DYCKMAN telephoned to Kedzie and asked if he could see her. She said that he could, and dressed furiously while he made the distance to her apartment.

She gleaned from his look and from the way he took her two hands in his that he had serious news to bring her. She had not been awake long enough to read the papers, and this was her first death. She cried helplessly when she learned that her husband was gone away with all her bitterness for his farewell. She remembered the best of him, and he came back to her for a while as the poet who had made her his muse—the only one she could telegraph to when she returned to New York alone, her first and only husband.

She was afraid that she belittled herself in Dyckman's eyes when she let slip the remorseful wail, "I wish I had been kinder to the poor boy!"

But she did not belittle herself in any such tendernesses of regret. She endeared herself by her grief, her self-reproach, her childish humility before the power of death. Her tears were beautiful in Jim's sight. But it is the blessing and the shame of tears that they cure the grief that causes them. At first they bleed and burn; then they flow soft and cool. They cleanse and brighten the eyes and even wash away the cinders from the funeral smoke.

Dyckman's heart was drawn out of him toward Kedzie and his arms held her shaken body devotedly. But at length she ceased to weep, and a last long sob became dangerously like a sigh of relief. She smiled through the rain and apologized for weeping, when she should have

apologized for stopping weeping. Then Dyckman's love of her seemed to withdraw backward into his heart. And his arms suddenly wearied of clasping her.

When she had seemed hardly to know that he was there he felt necessary and justified. When she took comfort in his arms and held them about her he felt ashamed, revolted, profane.

Mrs. Thropp had wept a little in sympathy with Kedzie, and Adna had looked amiably disconsolate; but by and by Mrs. Thropp was murmuring:

"After all, perhaps it was for the best. The Lord's will be done!"

Dyckman shrank as if a blasphemy had been shouted. In a hideously short time Mrs. Thropp was saying, briskly:

"Of course, honey, you've got no idea of puttin' on black for him."

"If I believed in mourning, I would," Kedzie answered without delay, "but the true mourning is in the heart."

Dyckman felt an almost uncontrollable desire to get away before he said something that might be true. He began to wonder what, after all, poor Gilfoyle had experienced from this hard-hearted little beauty. He saw that he was almost forgotten already. He thought, "How fast they go, the dead!" That same Villon had said it centuries before: "*Les morts vont vites.*"

The Thropps settled down to a comfortable discussion of future plans. One ledger had been finished. They would open a new one. Jim saw that Gilfoyle's departure had been accepted as a Heaven-sent solution of Kedzie's problems.

Abruptly it came to Dyckman that the solution of their problem was the beginning of a whole volume of new problems for him. He recalled that while he had become Kedzie's fiancé in ignorance of his predecessor, he had rashly promised to buy off Gilfoyle as soon as he learned of him. But death had come in like a perfect waiter and subtly removed from the banquet-table the thing that

offended. Nothing had happened, however, to release Dyckman from his engagement. Gilfoyle's death ought not to have made a more important difference than his life would have made, and yet it made all the difference in the world to Dyckman's feelings.

He could not say this, however. He could not ask to be excused from his compact. His heart and his brain cried out that they did not want this merry little widow for their wife, but his lips could not frame the words. During the long silences and the evasive chatter that alternated he felt one idea in the air: "Why doesn't Mr. Dyckman offer to go on with the marriage?" Yet he could not make the offer. Nor could he make the counter-claim for a dissolving of the betrothal.

He studied the Thropp trio and pictured the ridicule and the hostility they would arouse among his family and friends—not because they were poor and simple and lowly, but because they were not honest and sweet and meek. The Dyckmans had poor relations and friends in poverty and old peasant-folk whom they loved and admired and were proud to know. But Dyckman felt that the elder Thropps deserved to be rebuffed with snobbery because of their own snobbery. Nevertheless, he was absolutely incapable of administering discipline.

At last Mrs. Thropp grew restive, fearsome that the marriage might not take place, and desperately fearful that she might be cheated out of her visit in the spare room at the home of the great Mrs. Dyckman. She said, grimly:

"Well, we might as well understand one another, Mr. Dyckman. You asked my daughter to marry you, didn't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Thropp."

"Do you see anything in what's happened to prevent your getting married?"

"No, Mrs. Thropp."

"Then I don't see much use wastin' time, do you? Life's too uncertain to go postponin' happiness when it's

right within your reach. Kedzie's father and I ought to be gettin' back home, and I'd feel a heap more comfortable if I could know my poor little chick was safe in the care of a good man."

The possibility of getting Mr. and Mrs. Thropp out of town soon was the one bright thought in Dyckman's mind. He felt compelled to say:

"Then let us have the ceremony, by all means. We shall have to wait awhile, I suppose, for decency's sake."

"Decency!" said Mrs. Thropp, managerially. "My Kedzie hadn't lived with the man for a long while. Nobody but us knows that she ever did live with him. He'd abandoned her, and when he came back it was only to try to get money out of her. I can't see that she has any call to worry about decency's sake. He's done her harm enough. She can't do him any good by keepin' you waitin'."

"Just as you think best, Mrs. Thropp," said Dyckman. He began to smile in spite of himself. He was thinking how many mothers and daughters had tried to get him to the altar, not because they loved him, but because they loved his father's money and fame. Jim had dodged them all and made a kind of sport of it. And now he was cornered and captured by this old barbarian with her movie-beauty daughter who was a widow and wouldn't wear weeds.

Mrs. Thropp saw Dyckman's smile, but did not dare to ask its origin. She asked, instead:

"Would you be having a church wedding, do you think?"

"Indeed not," said Dyckman, with such incision that Mrs. Thropp felt it best not to risk a debate.

"Just a quiet wedding, then?"

"As quiet as possible, if you don't mind."

Kedzie sat speechless through all this. She wished that Jim would show more ardor for her, but she felt that he was doing fairly well not to knock her parents' heads

together the way he had her husband's and his friend's. She was as eager as Jim to get rid of the elder Thropps, but she wanted to make sure of the wedding, and her mother was evidently to be trusted to bring it about. At length Jim spoke in the tone of the condemned man who says, "Well, let's hurry up and get the execution off our minds":

"I'll go and see a lawyer and make inquiries about how the marriage can be done."

He started to say to Kedzie, "You ought to know."

She started to tell him about the Marriage License Bureau in the Municipal Building. Both recaptured silence tactfully.

He kissed Kedzie, and he had a narrow escape from being kissed by Mrs. Thropp.

THE THIRD BOOK

MRS. JIM DYCKMAN IS NOT SATISFIED

THIS THESIS BOOK

IF ANY PAGE IS MISSING
OR ILLEGIBLE

CHAPTER I

IN the history of nations sometimes a paragraph serves for a certain decade, while a volume is not enough for a certain day. It is so with the history of persons.

In the thirty-six hours after he received Charity Coe's invitation to call Jim Dyckman passed from being Charity's champion against her own husband to being Kedzie's champion against hers. Charity rewarded his chivalrous pommeling of Cheever by asking him never to come near her again. Kedzie rewarded his punishment of Gilfoyle by arranging that he should never leave her again.

It was Charity that he longed for, and Kedzie that he engaged to marry.

In that period Peter Cheever had traveled a very short distance in a journey he had postponed too long. Cheever had been hardly conscious when they smuggled him at midnight from his club to his own home. He had slept ill and achily. He was ashamed to face the servants, and he wanted to murder his valet for being aware of the master's defeat.

He did not know how ashamed the household retainers were of him and of themselves. The valet and butler had earned good sums on occasions by taking tips from Cheever on prize-fighters and jockeys. But they felt betrayed now, and as disconsolate as the bottle-holders and towel-flappers of a defeated pugilist.

They did not know who had whipped their master till the word came from the Dyckman household that their master had come home glorious from whipping the

stuffing out of somebody. It was easy to put one and one together and make two.

One of Cheever's worst embarrassments was the matter of Zada. His battered head suffered tortures before it contrived a proper lie for her. Then he called Zada up from his house and explained that as he was leaving his club to fly to her, his car had skidded into another, with the result that he had been knocked senseless and cut up with flying glass; otherwise he was in perfect shape. Unfortunately, he had been recognized and taken to his official home instead of to the residence of his heart.

Zada was all for dashing to him at once; but he persuaded her that that would be quite impossible. He was in no real danger in his own house, and he would come back to his heart's one real first, last, only, and onliest darling love just as soon as he could.

She subsided in wails of terror and loneliness. They touched his heart so that he determined to end his effort at amphibian existence, give up his legal establishment and legalize the illegal.

He wrote a note to Charity with much difficulty, since his knuckles were sore and his pride was black and blue. His spoken language was of the same tints. His written language was polite and formal.

It was a silly, tragic situation that led a husband to write his wife a letter requesting an interview. Charity sent back a scrawl—"*Yes, in fifteen minutes.*"

Cheever spent a bad quarter of an hour dressing himself. His face was too raw to endure a razor, and the surgeon had put little cross-patches of adhesive tape on one of his cheek-bones and at the edge of his mouth, where his lip had split as the tooth behind it went overboard.

He yowled as he slipped his arms into a long bathrobe, and he struck at the valet when the wretch suggested a little powder for one eye.

Charity had seen Cheever brought in at midnight and had looked to it that he had every care. But now she

came into his room with a maidenly timidity. He did not know that she had rebuked Jim Dyckman with uncharacteristic wrath for the attack. She did not tell Cheever this, even though his first words to her demanded some such defense.

In the quarrels of lovers, or of those who have exchanged loves, it makes little difference what the accusation is all about: the thing that hurts is the fact of accusation.

Charity was so shamed at being stormed at by her husband that it was a mere detail that he stormed at her with a charge that she had goaded Jim Dyckman on to attack him.

Cheever had a favor to ask; so he put the charge more mildly now than he had in his first bewildered rage. He accepted Charity's silence as pleading guilty. So he went on:

"The fact that you chose Dyckman for your authorized thug and bravo proves what I have thought for some time, that you love him and he loves you. Now I have no desire to come between two such turtle-doves, especially when one of them is one of those German flying-machine *Taubes* and goes around dropping dynamite-bombs on me through club roofs.

"I'm not afraid of your little friend, and as soon as I get well I'll get him; but I want it to be purely an exercise in the fistic art, and not a public fluttering of family linen. So since you want Jim Dyckman, take him, by all means, and let me bow myself out of the trio.

"I'll give you a nice, quiet little divorce, and do the fair thing in the alimony line, and then after a proper interval you and little Jimmie can toddle over to the parson and then toddle off to hell-and-gone, for all I care. How does that strike you, my dear?"

Charity pondered, and then she said, "And where do you toddle off to?"

"Does that interest you?"

"Anything that concerns your welfare interests me."

"I see. Well, don't worry about me."

"There's no hurry, of course?"

"Not on my part," said Cheever. "But Dyckman must be growing impatient, since he tries to murder me to save the lawyer's fees."

"Well, if you're in no hurry, Peter, I'm not. I'll think it over for a few months. It's bad weather for divorces now, anyway."

Cheever's heart churned in his breast. He knew that Zada could not afford to wait. He should have married her long ago, and there was no time to spare now. Charity's indifference frightened him. He did not dream that through the dictagraph Charity had shared with him Zada's annunciation of her approaching motherhood.

He turned and twisted in flesh and spirit, trying to persuade Charity to proceed immediately for a divorce, but in vain.

Finally she ceased to laugh at him and demanded, sternly, "Why don't you tell me the truth for once?"

He stared at her, and after a crisis of hesitation broke and informed her of what she already knew. Now that he was at her feet, Charity felt only pity for him, and even for Zada. She was sorrier for them than for herself.

So she said: "All right, old man; let's divorce us. Will you or shall I?"

"You'd better, of course; but you must not mention poor Zada."

"Oh, of course not!"

A brief and friendly discussion of ways and means followed, and then Charity turned to go, saying:

"Well, I'll let you know when you're free. Are there any other little chores I can do for you?"

"No, thanks. You're one damned good sport, and I'm infernally sorry I—"

"Let's not begin on sorries. Good night!"

And such was unmarriage *à la mode.*

CHAPTER II

AND now having felt sorry for everybody else, Charity began to feel pleasantly sorry for Jim Dyckman. Her own rebuke of him for assaulting Cheever had absolved him. In the retrospect, the attack took on a knightliness of devotion. She recalled his lonely dogging of her footsteps. If he had played the dog, after all, she loved dogs. What was so faithful, trustworthy, and lovable as a dog?

But how was Charity to get word to Jim of her new heart? She could not whistle him back. She could hardly go to him and apologize for having been a good wife to a bad husband. And a married lady simply must not say to a bachelor: "Pardon me a moment, while I divorce my present consort. I'd like to wear your name for a change."

Charity might have been capable even of such a derring-do if she had known that Jim Dyckman's bachelorhood was threatened with immediate extinction by the Thropps. But she could not know. For, however Jim's soul may have been mumbling, "Help, help!" he made no audible sound. Unwilling brides may shriek for rescue, but unwilling bridegrooms must not complain.

By a coincidence that was not strange Charity selected for her lawyer Travers McNiven, the very man that Jim Dyckman selected. All three had been friends since childhood. McNiven had been taken into the famous partnership of Hamnett, Dawsey, Coggeshall, Thurlow & McNiven.

When Jim Dyckman telephoned him for an appoint-

ment he was told to make it the next morning, as another client had pre-empted the afternoon. Jim was glad enough of an excuse to postpone his marriage by a day, never dreaming that Charity was the client who had pre-empted McNiven.

McNiven wondered at the synchrony, but naturally mentioned neither client to the other. His office was far down-town and far up in the air. Its windows gave an amplitudinous vision of the Harbor which Mr. Ernest Poole has made his own, but which was now a vestibule to the hell of the European war. All the adjoining land was choked far backward with a vast blockade of explosive freight-trains waiting to be unloaded into the unheard-of multitude of munition-ships waiting to run the gantlet of the German submarines.

Charity had run that gantlet and was ready to run it again on another errand of mercy, but first she must make sure that Zada's baby should not enter the world before its mother entered wedlock.

After McNiven had proffered her a chair and she had exclaimed upon the grandeur of the harborscape, she began:

"Sandy, I've come to see you about—"

"One moment!" McNiven broke in. "Before you speak I must as an honest lawyer warn you against the step you contemplate."

"But you don't know what it is yet."

"I don't have to. I know that people come to lawyers only to get out of scrapes or to get into scrapes dishonestly or unwisely. Furthermore, every step that any human being contemplates is a dangerous one and bound to lead to trouble."

"Oh, hush!" said Charity. "Am I supposed to pay you for that sort of advice?"

"Being a friend, and a woman, and very rich, you will doubtless never pay me at all. But let me warn you, Charity, that there is nothing in life more dangerous than

taking a step in any possible direction—unless it is staying where you are."

"Oh, dear," sighed Charity, "you're worse than dear Doctor Mosely."

"Ah, you've been to the dear old doctor! And he's refused to help you. When the Church denies a woman her way she comes to the devil. You interest me. It's a divorce, then?"

"Yes."

McNiven remembered Jim Dyckman's ancient squiredom to Charity and his recent telephony and he said to himself, "Aha!" But he said to Charity, "Go on."

"Sandy, my husband and I have agreed to disagree."

"Then for Heaven's sake don't tell me about it!"

"But I've got to."

"But you mustn't! Say, rather, I have decided to divorce my husband."

"All right. Consider my first break unmade. Peter has asked me—I mean, Peter has said that he will furnish me with the evidence on one condition: that I shall not mention a certain person with whom he has been living. He offers to provide me with any sort of evidence you lawyers care to cook up."

McNiven stared at her and spoke with startling rigor. "Are you trying to involve me in your own crimes?"

"Don't be silly. Peter says it is done all the time."

"Not in this office. Do you think I'd risk and deserve disbarment even to oblige a friend?"

"You mean you won't help me, then?" Charity sighed, rising with a forlorn sense of friendlessness.

McNiven growled: "Sit down! Of course I'll help you, but I don't intend to let you drag me into ruin, and I won't help you get a divorce that would be disallowed at the first peep of light."

"What can I do then? Peter said it could be managed quickly and quietly."

"There are ways and ways, Charity Coe. The great

curse of divorce is the awful word 'collusion.' It can be avoided as other curses can with a little attention to the language. Remember the old song, 'It's not so much the thing you say, as the nasty way you say it.' That hound of a husband of yours wants to protect that creature he has been flaunting before the world. So he offers to arrange to be caught in a trap with another woman, and make you a present of the evidence. Isn't that so?"

"I believe it is."

"Now the law says that 'any understanding preceding the act of adultery' is collusion; it involves the committing of a crime. It would be appalling for a nice little body like you to connive at such a thing, wouldn't it?"

Charity turned pale. "I hadn't realized just what it meant."

"I thought not," said McNiven.

"He'll have to give me evidence of—of something that has already happened, then, won't he?"

"The law calls that collusion also."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Couldn't you get evidence somehow without taking it from him?"

Charity was about to shake her head, but she nodded it violently. She remembered the detectives she had engaged and the superabundant evidence they had furnished her. She told McNiven about it and he was delighted till she reminded him that she had promised not to make use of Zada's name.

McNiven told her that she had no other recourse, and advised her to see her husband. She said that it was hopeless and she expressed a bitter opinion of the law. It seemed harsher than the Church, especially harsh to those who did not flout its authority.

While Charity talked McNiven let his pipe-smoke trail out of the window into the infinite where dreams fade from reality and often from memory, and he thought,

"If I can help Jim and Charity to get together after all this blundering it will be a good job."

He was tempted to tell her that Jim was coming to see him, too, but he was afraid that she knew it. If he had told her—but there goes that eternal "if" again!

CHAPTER III

IT is a fierce and searching test of a woman's mettle when first she is confronted with temptation to rebel against the control of her preacher. Men are used to it, and women must grow more and more used to it as they advance into their long-deferred heritage.

Charity Coe Cheever was religious by every instinct. From childhood she had thrilled to the creed and the music and the eloquence of her Sundays. The beautiful industries of Christianity had engaged her. She had been happy within the walls and had felt that her piety gave her wings rather than chains.

And then she came abruptly to the end of her tether. She found her soul revolted by a situation which her pastor commanded her to accept as her lifelong portion. She found that to tolerate, and by tolerating to collaborate in, the adultery of her husband and his mistress was better religion than to free herself from odious triplicity. She found that it was better religion to annul her womanhood and remain childless, husbandless, and comfortless than to claim the privileges, the freedoms, the renewing opportunities the law allowed.

She came suddenly face to face with the terrifying fact that the State offered her help and strength that the Church denied her.

She had reached indeed what the doleful balladists would call "the parting of the ways," though no poet has yet chosen for his heroine the distraught wretch who is driven to the bleak refuge of divorce.

So long as it concerned only her own happiness Charity could put away the choice. But the more she pondered that unless she divorced her husband his mistress's baby would come into the world with a hideous birthmark, the more she felt it her duty to flout the Church. She shuddered to think of the future for that baby, especially if it should be a girl. She felt curiously a mother-obligation toward it. She blamed herself for her husband's infidelity. She humbled herself and bowed her neck to the shame.

She left the Church and went to the law. And then she found that the law had its own cruelties, its own fetters and walls and loopholes and hypocrisies. She found that it is not even possible to be a martyr and retain all one's dignity. One cannot even go to the stake without some guile.

The wicked law which the Church abhorred had its own idea of wickedness, and in the eyes of the law the agreement of a husband and a wife to part was something loathsome. She expressed her amazement to McNiven.

"It seems to me," she sighed, "if both husband and wife want a divorce, they know best; and that fact ought to be sufficient grounds in itself. And yet you tell me that if the law once gets wind of the fact they've got to live together forever."

"That's it. They've got to live together whether they love together or not—though of course you can get a separation very easily, on almost any ground."

"But a separation is only a guarantee of—of infidelity, I should think."

"Of course it is," said Lawyer McNiven.

"Then everything seems all wrong."

"Of course it is."

"Then why doesn't somebody correct it?"

"Who's going to bell the cat? Anybody who advocates divorce by mutual consent is sure to be lynched more or less fatally, and especially lynched by the very

people who are making a mockery of matrimony in their own lives.

"One marriage in twelve in the United States ends in divorce. You'll not find anybody who dares to say that that is not a crying scandal. Yet you and I know that home life in America is as pure and honorable as in any other country. I'm an awful heathen, of course, but I'll bet you I'm a true prophet when I say that divorce will increase as the world goes on, instead of decreasing, and that in all the countries where divorce is forbidden or restricted it will grow freer and freer. Statistics prove it all over the globe."

To Charity Coe, the devout churchwoman, this picture was appalling.

"Oh, in Heaven's name, what will happen? The world will go all to pieces!"

"That's what they said when men asked for the vote and for education, when women asked for education and the vote; that's what they said when people opposed the divine right of kings, and when they asked for religious freedom; that's what they said when people opposed slavery; that's what they said when people said that insane people were not inhabited by devils and should be treated as invalids. The trouble, Charity, is that a certain spirit has always been abroad in the world fighting imaginary devils with the best intentions in the world. And in all history there has never been anybody so dangerous to human welfare as the zealot who wants to protect other people from themselves and from the devils.

"The insane people were never inhabited by devils, and neither are the sane people. Most men want one wife and most women want one husband. Even in the polygamous countries you'll not find any more real polygamy than you find in the countries with the strictest marriage laws. Bluebeard was a Mohammedan, but Don Juan was a Christian. Spain has no divorce on any grounds; neither has Italy. Would you point to those

countries as models of domestic purity? Does any sane person dare say that home life in Spain is purer than in the United States?

"I tell you, easy divorce goes right along with merciful laws, public schools, clean prisons, free press, free speech."

Mrs. Cheever was a very good woman, and she abominated divorces. She had very peculiar reasons for wanting one herself, as every one has who wants one, but she felt her case to be so exceptional that it proved the rule against divorces. She shrank a little from the iconoclastic lawyer she had come to for aid, and reminded him of the solemnity of the theme.

"Don't you believe in the sanctity of matrimony?"

"Just as much as I believe in the sanctity of personal liberty and a contract and a debt and the obligation to vote and bear arms and equality of opportunity and responsibility and—oh, a lot of other sacred things—just as much and no more."

"But the Church calls marriage a sacrament."

"It does now, yes; but it didn't for over fifteen hundred years."

"What!"

"It's true. The trouble with you religious people is that you never know the history of your own religion. And remember one more thing: the marriage rules of the Christian Church are all founded on the theories of men who never married. No wonder they found it easy to lay down hard and fast rules. Remember another thing: the early Church fathers, Saint Paul, Hieronymus, and thousands of others, believed that marriage was only a little bit better than the worst evil, and that womankind was hardly more than the devil's natural weapon.

"It was not until the Church was eleven hundred and sixty-four years old that Peter Lombard put marriage among the seven sacraments. And marriage did not become an official matter of Church jurisdiction till the

Council of Trent in fifteen hundred and sixty-three. Think of that! Marriage was not a sacrament for fifteen centuries, and it has been one for less than four. And at that the Church could only manage the problem by increasing the number of impediments to marriage, which meant that it increased the number of excuses for annulling it.

"The total number of marriages annulled would amaze you. History is full of the most picturesque devices for granting divorce without seeming to. Sometimes they would illegitimize two or three generations in order to find a marriage within the forbidden degrees.

"According to Saint Matthew, Christ allowed divorce on the ground of adultery; according to Mark and Luke he made no such allowance. New York State follows Saint Matthew. The Catholic Church follows Luke and John. Old Martin Luther said that marriage was none of the Church's business. And that's what I think."

"You don't believe in the religious ceremony?"

"I'm afraid I don't believe in religious ceremonies about anything. I'm rather a heathen, you know—brought up in a good Presbyterian Calvinistic atmosphere, but I've lost it all. I'll give three cheers for virtue and the home as well as anybody; but my study and my experience lead me to distrust preachers and preaching.

"Still, this is a free country, and married people have a right to go to church if they want to, or to stay away. But I believe that marriage must be a civil contract and that no preacher has a right to denounce the State's prerogative, or try to belittle it. It is strange, but true, that when the Church has ruled the State the world has always groaned in corruption and cruelty.

"I believe that the law of New York is ridiculous in allowing only one ground for divorce, and if the United States ever arranges a uniform divorce law it will undoubtedly follow the policy of the more liberal States. I believe, with Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy and

a number of other good, great men, in cheap and easy divorce, divorce within reach of the poor.

"As for morality, you have only to read the literature of the time when there was no divorce to realize how little a safeguard it is for the home. Boccaccio gives a social portrait of such a life, and he is almost too indecent to read. Yet the picture he gives is not half so terrible as Saint Catherine of Siena gives. They had to cut that chapter out of her works."

"Oh, do you read her works, too?" said Charity, remembering her experience with that flaming biography.

"I read a little of everybody. But everything I read and see confirms my opinion that too much law is the curse of the world. Still, as I say, I'm not a lawmaker. I'm a law-manipulator. I've been wondering how long you would stand Cheever's scandalous behavior, and how long you could be convinced that you were helping the morals of the world by condoning and encouraging such immorality. Now that you've brought your troubles to my shop I'm going to help you if I can. But I don't want to get you or myself into the clutches of the law. You'll have to take care of your Church relations as best you can. They may turn you out, and you may roast on a gridiron hereafter, but that's your business. Personally, I think the only wicked thing I've ever heard of you doing was permitting your husband to board and lodge at your house while he carried on with that—woman. A harem divided against itself will not stand."

Charity was terrified by the man's profane view of sacred things, and she was horrified to learn that she could only release herself and Cheever from the shackles by a kind of trickery. She would have to make her escape somewhat as she had seen Houdini break from his ropes in the vaudevilles, by retiring behind dark curtains for a while.

She felt guilty and craven whichever way she turned, and she imagined the revulsion with which the good pastor

would regard her. Yet she was in a kind of mania to accept the scapegoat's burdens and be off into the wilderness. She was resolved to undergo everything for the sake of that poor child of Zada's hastening toward the world. She thanked Heaven she had no child of her own to complicate her duty.

She understood why Cheever wanted to protect the name of the child's mother from the courts, and she was baffled by the situation. The lawyer, who was so flippant about the things the Church held so sacred, was like a priest in his abhorrence of any tampering with the letter of the law.

She left his office for a conference with Cheever. She found at home that he had been telephoning to her. She called him up, and he came over at once.

"I'm in a devil of a mess, Charity," he said. "My lawyer refuses to help me give you evidence, and Zada —Miss L'Etoile—has developed a peculiar streak of obstinacy. She is determined that no other woman shall be named as the—er—co-respondent. She would rather be named herself. She says everybody knows about our —er—relations, anyway; and she doesn't care if they do."

Zada's character and her career had rendered her as contemptuous of public disapproval as any zealot of a loftier cause than love. There was a kind of barbaric insolence in her passion that Charity could not help admiring a little. She felt a whit ashamed of her own timidities and delicacies. The trouble with these proud defiers of the public, however, is that they do not ask the consent of the babies that are more or less implied in their superb amours.

Cheever was so distracted between the scruples of his lawyer and Zada's lack of them that when Charity confessed how she had set detectives on him and had secured a dictagraphic record of his alliance with Zada he was overcome with gratitude.

So little a shift of circumstances makes all the difference between a spy and a savior. The deed that he would once have cursed his wife for stooping to, perhaps have beaten her for, was now an occasion for overwhelming her with thanks.

He hurried away to his lawyer, and Charity telephoned McNiven for another appointment the next afternoon. Jim Dyckman's appointment was for the next morning.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Jim reached his office the next morning McNiven recommended the view to him, gave him a chair, refused a cigar, lighted his pipe instead, opened a drawer in his desk, put his feet in it, and leaned far back in his swivel chair.

Jim began, "Well, you see, Sandy, it's like this—"

"One moment," McNiven broke in. "Before you speak I must as an honest lawyer warn you against the step you contemplate."

"But, damn it, you don't know what it is yet."

"I don't have to. I know you, and I know that people don't come to lawyers, as a rule, except to get out of a scrape dishonestly or to get into one unwisely."

It was his office joke, and something more, a kind of formula for squaring himself with his conscience, a phrase for warding off the devil—as a beggar spits on the penny he accepts.

Having exorcised the demon, he said, "Go on, tell me: what's her name and how much does she want for silence?"

"How much do you want for silence?" Jim growled.

"Shoot!"

McNiven was startled and grieved when he learned that Jim was not making ready to marry Charity Coe, but some one else. Jim told him as much as he thought necessary, and McNiven guessed the rest. He groaned: "It seems impossible to surround marriage with such difficulties that people won't break in and out. I've got

a friend of yours trying to bust a home as quietly as you're trying to build one."

Of course, he did not mention Charity's name. He tried fervently to convince Jim that he ought not to marry Kedzie, but, failing to persuade him from the perils of matrimony, he did his best to help him to a decent secrecy. His best was the program Jim and Kedzie followed.

They motored over to the village of Jolicœur in New Jersey. There a local attorney, a friend of McNiven's, met them and vouched for them before the town clerk, who made out the license. He asked Kedzie if she had been married before, and she was so young and pretty and so plainly a girl that he laughed when he asked the question. And for answer Kedzie just laughed, too. He wrote down that she had never been married before. Kedzie had not really lied, and they can't arrest a person, surely, for just laughing. Not that she did not believe in the motto which Blanche Bates used to read so convincingly in "The Darling of the Gods": "It is better to lie a little than to be unhappy much."

Jim was shocked at the situation, but he could hardly be so ungallant as to call his fiancée a liar at such a time. Besides, he had heard that the law is interested in people's persons and not their names, and he was marrying Kedzie personally.

When the license was made out the lawyer whispered to the town clerk that it would be made worth his while to suppress the news for thirty days or more, and the clerk winked and grinned. Business was slow in matrimony, and he needed any little tips.

Now that they were licensed, Jim and Kedzie, being non-residents of New Jersey, must wait twenty-four hours before they could be married. They motored back to New York and went to the theater to kill the evening. The next afternoon Jim called for Kedzie, and they motored again to Jolicœur for the ceremony. Mr. and

Mrs. Thropp went along as witnesses and to make sure.

The lawyer had found a starveling parson in Jolicœur who asked the fatal questions and pronounced the twain man and wife, adding the warning, "Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder." Jim Dyckman was so befuddled that he heard it, "Let no man join whom God hath put asunder." But he paid the preacher well and added a large sum for the church on condition that the news of the marriage be kept out of the public records till the last legal moment.

Dyckman had tried to do the honorable thing by Kedzie. He was certainly generous, for a man can hardly give a woman more than himself and all he has. Dyckman, however, had been ashamed of a mental reservation or two. He could not repress a sneaking feeling that he had been less the kidnapper than the napped kid in this elopement. If anybody were to be arrested for abduction, it would not be he.

He reviled himself for confessing this to himself, and his sympathies went out to Kedzie because the poor child had to be yoked with a reluctant mate. A bridegroom ought to bring to his bride, above all things else, an eager heart. And that Jim could not bring.

He had been in his time a man and had sowed his measure of wild oats—more than a poor man could, less than a rich man might, far less than his unusual opportunities and the greedy throngs of temptresses encouraged. But he had taken Kedzie seriously, never dreaming how large a part ambition played in her devotion to him. He had been good to her and with her. The marriage ceremony had solemnized him further.

He had made a try at secrecy, because he felt shy about the affair. He knew that his name would lead the newspapers to haze him, as the rustic neighbors deride a rural couple with a noisy "chivaree." He dreaded the head-lines, as a kind of invasion of the bridal chamber.

In any case he had always hated flamboyant weddings with crowds and splendor. He did not believe that a marriage should be circused.

And thus at last he and Kedzie were united into one soul and one flesh, for better, for worse, etc., etc. Then they sped away to the remotest pleasant hotel to be found in darkest Jersey.

Jim registered under his own name, but blushed more hotly than if he had been engaged in an escapade. He could, perhaps, have taken Kedzie so with less regret than under the blessing of the clergy. For now he felt that he owed to her the all-hallowing grace of that utter love which was something he could not bestow.

She was the first wife he had ever had, and he wished a devoutness in that consummation. Lacking the sanctifying ardor, he was remorseful rather than triumphant, feeling himself more of a brute than even a bridegroom usually feels.

Kedzie did not seem to miss any perfection in his devotion, but he imputed that more to her innocent kindliness than to any grace of his own. The more he studied her the more he wondered why he did not love her more. She was tremendously exquisite, ferociously delicate, and almighty pretty. She was altogether too delectable, too cunningly wrought and fragile, for a hulking Titan like him.

He was positively afraid of her, and greatly amazed to see that she was not at all afraid of him. The moment the parson had done his worst a new Kedzie had appeared. She took command of everything instantly: ordered the parson about, shipped her mother and father back to town as if they were bothersome children, gave directions to Jim's chauffeur in a way that taught him who was to be who thenceforward, and made demands upon the hotel clerk in a tone that was more convincing of her wifehood than a marriage license could have been.

The quality missing in Kedzie was the sense of terror

and meekness expectable in brides. Her sole distress was, to Jim's amazement, the obscurity and solitude of their retreat. Kedzie was rapturous, but she had not the slightest desire to hide it from the world. She was Mrs. Jim Dyckman, and she didn't care who knew it.

Poor Kedzie had her own sorrows to mar her triumph. She was being driven to believe that the world was as badly managed as the Hyperfilm Studio. Providence seemed to provide tribulations for her like a scenario editor pursuing a movie heroine. The second reel had begun well, the rich but honest lover putting the poor but dishonest husband to flight. And now Honeymoon Number Two! She had dreamed of a gorgeous church ceremony with two pipe-organs, and an enlarged cast of clergymen, and wedding guests composed of real millionaires instead of movie "extras." But lo and behold, her adorer whisks her off to a little town in New Jersey and the great treaty is sealed in the shoddy parlor of a village parsonage! Gilfoyle's Municipal Building was a cathedral compared to this.

Then with never a white ribbon fluttering, not an old shoe or a grain of rice hurtling, the limousine of love rolled away to a neglected roadhouse. It was attractive enough as a roadhouse, but it was wretched as an imitation paradise.

In the face of this outrage everything else was a detail, a minor humiliation. There was no parrot on an area fire-escape to mock her next morning, but there was a still earlier rooster to banish sleep and parody her triumph. She slipped out of bed and went barefoot to the window-seat and gazed out into a garden.

She made a picture there that Ferriday would have loved in a "close-up." Her hair was tumbling down upon and around her shoulders, and her silken nightgown shimmered blissfully about her, sketching her contours in iridescent lines. She gazed, through an Elizabethan window of small panes, into a garden where sunrise

bloomed rosily in petals of light. She was the prettiest thing in the pretty picture; yet she was pouting at Fate—Fate, the old scenario writer who never could seem to bring off a happy ending.

Jim Dyckman, waking, saw her there and rubbed his eyes. Then he remembered. He pondered her and saw a tear or two slip out of her eyes, run along her cheek and pitch off into the tiny ravine of her bosom. He felt that he was a contemptible fiend who had committed a lynchable crime upon a tender and helpless victim. He closed his eyes in remorse, pretending to sleep, tormented like the repentant purchaser of a "white slave"—or rather a pink slave.

They breakfasted early and prettily. Kedzie was radiant now. She usually was when she was dealing in futures. They took up the question of their future residence. Jim proposed all the honeymoon haunts. Europe was out of the question, so he suggested Bermuda, Jamaica, California, Atlantic City, North Carolina, the Adirondacks. But Kedzie wanted to get back to New York.

This pained and bewildered him at first, because he felt that wedded rapture should hide itself awhile in its own lovely loneliness. Besides, his appearance in New York with a wife would involve him in endless explanations—and there would be reporters to see, and society editors and photographers, and his family and all his friends.

But those were just what Kedzie wanted. And at last she told him so.

"You act as if you were ashamed to be seen with me," she cried out.

The only answering argument to this was to take her back to town at once. The question of how and where they were to live was important. They had not settled it in the flurry of their hasty secret marriage.

Jim supposed that a hotel would be necessary till they found a house. He loathed the thought of a hotel, but

a suitable furnished house might not be in the market at the moment. He suggested an apartment.

This reminded Kedzie of how Gilfoyle had sent her out on a flat-hunt. She would have more money now, but there would doubtless be something the matter with every place. The most urgent thing was to get out of New Jersey. They could discuss residences in the car.

And they did discuss them. Building a new house would take years. Buying a ready-made house and furnishing it would take days, perhaps weeks. Kedzie could not choose which one of the big hotels she most wanted to camp in. Each had its qualities and their defects.

When they were on the ferry crossing the river she had not yet made up her mind. Jim had no mind to make up. He was reduced to a mere waiter on her orders. He laughed at himself. This morning at daybreak he had been reproaching himself for being a vicious gorilla who had carried off a little girl; now he was realizing that the little girl had carried him off and was making a monkey of him.

Kedzie's mental disarray was the overwhelming influence of infinite money. For the first time in her life she could disregard price-marks entirely. Curiously, that took away half the fun of the thing. It seemed practically impossible for her to be extravagant. She would learn before long that there are countless things that plutocrats cannot afford, that they also must deny themselves much, feel shabby, and envy their neighbors. For the present she realized only that she had oodles of money to sprinkle.

But it takes training to spend money, and Kedzie was now unpractised. Her wisher was so undeveloped that she could only wish for things available to people of moderate affluence. She could not wish for a yacht, because Jim had a yacht. She could not wish for a balloon because she would not go up in it. She could wish for a house, but she could not walk into it without delay.

She could not live in two hotels at once. Jewelry she could use in quantities, but even at that she had only so much surface area to hang it on. In fact, when she came right face to face with facts, what was there worth wishing for? What was the use of being so dog-on rich, anyway?

And there she hung on the door-sill of her new life like a child catching sight of a loaded Christmas tree and palsied with inability to decide which toy to grab first, horrified to realize that he cannot suck the orange and blow the trumpet at the same time.

When they reached the New York side of the Hudson the car rolled off the boat into the ferry-house and into the street, and when Jim said again, "Well, where do you want to go?" she had to sigh.

"Oh, Heavens! let's go home to my old apartment and talk it over." She gave the address to the chauffeur, and Jim smiled grimly. It gave him a little cynical amusement to act as passenger.

On the way up-town Kedzie realized that she was hungry and that there would be no food in her apartment. They turned to Sherry's. Kedzie left Jim and went into the dressing-room to smooth her hair after the motor flight.

And now, just too late, Charity Coe Cheever happened to arrive as the guest of Mrs. Duane. The sight of Jim alone brought a flush of hope to Charity's eyes. She greeted him with a breeziness she had hardly known since she was a girl. There was nothing about his appearance to indicate that he had just come across from New Jersey, where he had been made the husband of Mrs. Kedzie Thropp Gilfoyle.

Seeing Charity so unusually bright, Jim said, "What's happened to you, Charity, that you look so gay and free?"

"That's what I am."

"What?"

"Gay and free. Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes."

"I'm getting divorced."

"My Lord, no!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Oh, God, and me just married!"

Charity looked for an instant as if an arrow had flashed into her heart and struck her dead. Then with relentless courage she plucked out the steel and let the blood gush while she smiled.

"Congratulations, old boy. Who's the lucky lady?"

"It's the little girl I yanked out of Mrs. Noxon's pool."

"The one I asked you to look out for?"

"Yes."

"Well, isn't that fine! She was very pretty. I hope you'll be ever so happy."

"Thanks, Charity—thank you. Mighty nice of you! Of course, you know—er— Well, here she is." He beckoned to Kedzie, who came forward. "Mrs. Cheever, my wife. But you've met, haven't you?"

"Oh yes, indeed," said Charity Coe, with an effusion of cordiality that roused Kedzie's suspicions more than her gratitude. The first woman she met was already trying to get into her good graces! Charity Coe went on, with a little difficulty:

"But Mrs. Dyckman doesn't remember me. I met you at Mrs. Noxon's."

"Oh yes," said Kedzie, and a slow, heavy crimson darkened her face like a stream of treacle.

The first woman she met was reminding her of the time she was a poor young dancer with neither clothes nor money. It was outrageous to have this flung in her face at the very gate of Eden.

She was extremely cold to Charity Coe, and Charity saw it. Jim Dyckman died the death at finding Kedzie so cruel to the one who had befriended her. But he could not rebuke his wife, even before his lost love. So he said nothing.

Charity caught the heartsick, hangdog look in his eyes,

and she forbore to slice Kedzie up with sarcasm. She bade her a most gracious farewell and moved on.

Kedzie stared after her and her beautiful gown, and said: "Say, Jim, who were the Coes, anyway? Did they make their money in trade?"

Jim said that he would be divinely condemned, or words to that effect.

CHAPTER V

AND now Kedzie Thropp was satisfied at last — at least for the time being. She was a plump kitten, replete and purr-full, and the world was her catnip-ball.

There was no visible horizon to her wealth. Her name was one of the oldest, richest, noblest in the republic. She was a Dyckman now, double-riveted to the name with a civil license and a religious certificate. Tommie Gilfoyle had politely died, and like an obliging rat had died outside the premises. Hardly anybody knew that she had married him, and nobody who knew was going to tell.

Kedzie forgot Charity in the joy of ordering a millionaire's luncheon. This was not easy. She was never a glutton for food; excitement dimmed what appetite she had, and her husband, as she knew, hated made dishes with complex sauces.

Kedzie was baffled by the futility of commanding a lot of things she could not eat, just for the fun of making a large bill. She was like the traditional prospector who struck it rich and, hastening to civilization, could think of nothing to order but "forty dollars' worth of pork and beans."

Kedzie had to satisfy her plutocratic pride by bossing the waiter about, by complaining that the oysters were not chilled and the sherry was. She sent back the salad for redressing and insisted that the meat was from cold storage. She was no longer the poor girl afraid of the waiter.

Kedzie was having a good time, but she regretted that her wedding-ring was so small. She felt that wives ought to wear some special kind of plume, the price of the feather varying with the bank account. Kedzie would have had to carry an umbrella of plumes.

Still, she did pretty well on her exit. She went out like a million dollars. But her haughtiness fell from her when she reached home and found Mr. and Mrs. Thropp comfortably installed there, saving hotel bills.

Charity Coe had gone out feeling a million years old. She left the presence of Kedzie in a mood of tragic laughter. She was in one of those contemptible, ridiculous plights in which good people frequently find themselves as a result of kindliness and self-sacrifice.

For well-meant actions are as often and as heavily punished in this world as ill-meant—if indeed the word *punishment* has any respectability left. It is certainly obsolescent.

Many great good men, such as Brand Whitlock, the saint of Belgium, had been saying that the whole idea of human punishment of human beings is false, cruel, and futile, that it has never accomplished anything worth while for either victim or inflictor. They place it among the ugly follies, the bloody superstitions that mankind has clung to with a fanaticism impervious to experience. They would change the prisons from hells to schools and hospitals.

Even the doctrine of a hell beyond the grave is rather neglected now, except by such sulphuric press agents as Mr. Sunday. But in this world we cannot sanely allege that vice is punished and virtue rewarded until we know better what virtue is and what is vice. All that it is safe to say is that punishment is a something unpleasant and reward a something pleasant that follows a deed—merely follows in point of time, not in proof of judgment.

So the mockery of Charity's good works was neither a punishment nor a ridicule. It was a coincidence, but a

sad one. Charity had befriended Kedzie without making a friend thereby; she had lost, indeed, her good friend Jim. Charity's affection for Jim would make her suspect in Kedzie's eyes, and Kedzie's gratitude had evidently already cut its sharper-than-a-serpent's wisdom tooth.

Charity had been patient with her husband and had lost him. She had asked the Church for her freedom and had been threatened with exile. Then her husband had demanded his freedom and forced her to choose between blackening her own soul with the brand "divorcée" or blackening her husband's mistress's baby's soul with the brand "illegitimate."

She had preferred to take the shame upon herself. But who would give her credit? She knew how false was the phrase that old Ovid uttered but could not comfort even himself with, "The mind conscious of rectitude laughs at the lies of gossip." No woman can afford such security.

Charity had such a self-guying meekness, indeed, that instead of clothing herself in the robes of martyrdom she ridiculed herself because of one thing: In a pigeonhole of her brain a little back-thought had lurked, a dim hope that if she gave her husband the divorce he implored she might be free to remold her shattered life nearer to her heart's desire—with Jim Dyckman. Her husband, indeed, had taunted her with that intention, and now she had no sooner launched her good name down the slippery ways of divorce than she found Jim Dyckman married and learned that her premature and unwomanly hopes for him were ludicrously thwarted!

She went to McNiven's office with a dark life ahead of her. She had no desire left except to disentangle herself from Peter Cheever's life as quietly and swiftly as possible. She told McNiven this and said:

"How quickly can the ghastly job be finished?"

"Theoretically it could be done in a day, but practically it takes a little longer. For we must avoid the look of

collusion like the plague. So we'll allow, say, a week. If we're lucky with our judges, it may take less."

Then he outlined the steps to be taken. An unusual chain of circumstances enabled him to carry them out with unexpected neatness and despatch, so that the case became a very model of how gracefully the rigid laws of divorce could be manipulated in the Year of Our Lord 1916 and of the Founding of the Republic 140.

It may be interesting to outline the procedure as a social document in chicanery, or social surgery, as one wills to call it.

McNiven first laid under Charity's eyes a summons and complaint against Peter Cheever. She glanced over it and found it true except that Zada L'Etoile was not named; Cheever's alleged income was vastly larger than she imagined, and her claim for alimony was exorbitant.

Her first question was: "Who is this unknown woman going by the name of Sarah Tishler? I thought Miss L'Etoile was to be the only woman mentioned."

McNiven explained: "L'Etoile is her stage name. She doesn't know her real name herself, for she was taken from the foundling-asylum as a child by a family named Tishler. We have taken advantage of that disadvantage."

Charity bowed to this, but she protested the income credited to her husband.

"Peter doesn't earn half as much as that."

"How do you know what he earns?" said McNiven.

"He's told me often enough."

"Do you believe all he told you?"

"No; but, anyway, I don't want any of his old alimony. I have money enough of my own."

"That can be arranged later, but if you don't swear to this as it lies you can't have your divorce."

"Why not?"

"Because there has to be a contest, and we've got to give his lawyer something to fight."

Charity yielded wearily. She fought against making

an affidavit to the truth of the complaint, but when NcNiven said, "No affidavit, no divorce," she took her oath before the clerk who was called in as a notary public.

"Now you may go home," said McNiven; and Charity stole out, feeling herself a perjured criminal. Then the divorce-mill began to grind.

A process-server from McNiven's office went across Broadway to Tessier's office, where Cheever was waiting. He handed the papers to Cheever, who handed them to Tessier, who hastily dictated an answer denying the adultery, the alleged income, and the propriety of the alimony claimed.

Tessier and Cheever visited McNiven in his office and served him with this answer. The two lawyers then dictated an agreement to a reference, Tessier adding a statement that he considered his client equipped with a good defense and that he intended to oppose the suit in good faith.

Their clerks took this to the County Court House in City Hall Square and filed it with the clerk of the Supreme Court, Special Term, Part II.

Justice Cardwell, before leaving his chambers, read the papers and issued an order naming as referee the lawyer Henry Firth.

Here for a moment the veil of secrecy was rent, for this order could not be suppressed. It was published in *The Law Journal* the next morning, and the eager reporters reading therein that Mrs. Peter Cheever was suing her husband for a divorce on statutory grounds, dashed to the records and learned that she accused him of undue intimacy with an unknown woman going by the name of Sarah Tishler.

By selecting an obscure town this publicity might have been deferred, but it would have meant delay in the case as well.

A flock of reporters sped like hawks for Charity's home, where they were denied admittance; for Cheever's office,

where they were told that he was out of town; and even for Zada L'Etoile's apartment, where they were informed that she had left the State, as indeed she had. Sarah Tishler had a right, being named as co-respondent, to enter the case and defend her name, but she waived the privilege.

The evening papers made what they could of the sensation, but nobody mentioned Zada, for nobody knew that fate had tried to conceal her by naming her Tishler, and nobody quite dared to mention her without legal sanction.

On the next day Lawyer Firth held court in his office. Reporters were excluded, and the lawyers and detectives and Cheever and Charity, who had to be present, declined to answer any of the questions rained upon them in the corridors and the elevators.

Mr. Firth was empowered to swear in witnesses and take testimony. The evidence of the detectives, corroborated by the evidence of a hall-boy and a janitor and by proof of the installation of the dictagraph, seemed conclusive to Mr. Firth.

Cheever denied that he had committed the alleged adultery and gave proof that his income was not as stated. Attorney Tessier evaded the evidence of adultery, but fought hard against the evidence of prosperity. Referee Firth made his report finding the defendant guilty of the statutory offense, and ordered a decree of divorce, with a diminished alimony. He appended a transcript of the evidence and filed it with the Clerk of the County of New York. The statutory fee for a referee was ten dollars a day, but the lawyers had quietly agreed on the payment of a thousand dollars for expediting the case. With this recompense Mr. Firth ended his duties in the matter.

McNiven prepared a motion to confirm the report of the referee and took it to Tessier, who accepted service for his client. McNiven then went to the county clerk and filed a notice that the motion would be called up the

next morning. The clerk put it on the calendar of Special Term, Part III.

The next morning McNiven appeared before Justice Palfrey, submitted his motion, and asked for an interlocutory decree. He left his paper with the clerk. During the afternoon Justice Palfrey looked over the referee's report and decided to grant McNiven's motion. In view of the prominence of the contestants and since he had heard of Charity's good works, and felt sure that she had suffered enough in the wreck of her home, he ordered the evidence sealed. This harmed nobody but the hungry reporters and the gossip-appetite of the public.

McNiven was waiting in the office of the clerk, and as soon as he learned that the judge had granted the motion he submitted the formal orders to be signed. The clerk entered the interlocutory decree. And now the marriage was ended except for three months of grace.

The first day after that period had passed McNiven submitted an affidavit that there had been no change in the feelings of the parties and there was no good reason why the decree should not be granted. He made up the final papers, gave Tessier notice, and deposited the record with the clerk. Justice Cruden, then sitting in Special Term, Part III., signed the judgment. And the deed was done. Mrs. Cheever was permitted to resume her maiden name, but that meant too much confusion; she needed the "Mrs." for protection of a sort.

The divorce carried with it a clause forbidding the guilty husband to marry any one else before five years had passed. But while the divorce was legal all over the world, this restriction ended at the State bounds.

So Peter Cheever and Zada L'Etoile went over into the convenient realm of New Jersey the next morning, secured a license, and on the following day were there made man and wife before all the world. This entitled them to a triumphant return to New York. And now Peter Cheever had also done the honorable thing. This "honor-

able thing" business will be one of the first burdens dropped by the men when the women perfect their claim to equality.

In about two weeks a daughter was born to the happy twain. Thanks to Charity's obliging nature, it was christened in church and accepted in law as a complete Cheever. Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Cheever now began to live (more or less) happily ever after (temporarily).

Altogether it was a triumph of legal, social, and surgical technic. It outraged many virtuous people. There was a good deal of harsh criticism of everybody concerned. The worthies who believe that divorce is the cause of the present depraved state of the United States bewailed one more instance of the vile condition of the lawless Gomorrah. The eternal critics of the rich used the case as another text in proof of the complete control that wealth has over our courts, though seventy-five divorces to obscure persons were granted at the same time without difficulty, with little expense and no newspaper punishment.

Dr. Mosely wrote Charity a letter of heartbroken condemnation, and she slunk away to the mountains to escape from the reproach of all good people and to recuperate for another try at the French war hospitals. She had let her great moving-picture project lapse. She felt hopelessly out of the world and she was afraid to face her friends. Still, she had money and her "freedom," and one really cannot expect everything.

CHAPTER VI

THE ninety days following Charity's encounter with Jim Dyckman and his bride at Sherry's had been busy times for her and epochal in their changes. From being one of the loneliest and most approved women in America she had become one of the loneliest and least approved. Altruism is perhaps the most expensive of the virtues.

No less epochal were those months for the Dyckmans, bride and groom. Their problems began to bourgeon immediately after they left New Jersey and went to Kedzie's old apartment for further debate as to their future lodgings.

Mr. and Mrs. Thropp were amazed by their sudden return. Adna was a trifle sheepish. They found him sitting in the parlor in his shirt-sleeves and stocking feet, and staring out of the window at the neighbors opposite. In Nimrim it was a luxury to be able to spy into the windows of one neighbor at a time. Opposite Adna there were a hundred and fifty neighbors whom it cost nothing to watch. Some of them were very startling; some of them were stupid old ladies who rocked, or children who flattened their noses against the windows, or Pekingese doglets who were born with their noses against a pane, apparently. But some of the neighbors were fascinatingly careless of inspection—and they always promised to be more careless than they were.

Mrs. Thropp came rushing in from the kitchen. She had been trying in vain to make a friend of Kedzie's one

servant. But this maid, like a self-respectful employee or a good soldier, resented the familiarity of an official superior as an indecency and an insult. She made up her mind to quit.

After Mrs. Thropp had expressed her wonderment at seeing her children return, she turned the full power of her hospitality on poor Jim Dyckman. He could not give notice and seek another job.

Mrs. Thropp's first problem was the proper style and title of her son-in-law.

"What am I goin' to call you, anyhow?" she said. "*Jim* sounds kind of familiar on short acquaintance, and *James* is sort of distant. *Son-in-law* is hor'ble, and *Son* is— How would you like it if I was to call you '*Son*'? What does your own mother call you?"

"*Jimsy*," Jim admitted, shamefacedly.

"*Jimsy* is right nice," said Mrs. Thropp, and she Jimsied him thenceforward, to his acute distress. He found that he had married not Kedzie only but all the Thropps there were. The father and mother were the mere foreground of a vast backward and abyss of relations, beginning with a number of Kedzie's brothers and sisters and their wives and husbands. Jim was a trifle stunned to learn what lowly jobs some of his brothers-in-law were glad to hold.

Mrs. Thropp felt that it was only right to tell Jim as much as she could about his new family. She told him for hours and hours. She described people he had never seen or heard of and would travel many a mile to avoid. He had never cared for genealogy, and his own long and brilliant ancestry did not interest him in the slightest. He had hundreds of relations of all degrees of fame and fortune, and he felt under no further obligation to them than to let alone and be let alone.

His interest in his new horde of relations-in-law was vastly less than nothing. But Mrs. Thropp gave him their names, their ages, habits, diseases, vices, manner-

isms, idiosyncrasies. She recounted doings and sayings of infinite unimportance and uninterest.

With the fatuous, blindfolded enthusiasm of an after-dinner speaker who rambles on and on and on while the victims yawn, groan, or fold their napkins and silently steal away, Mrs. Thropp poured out her lethal anecdotes.

Jim went from weariness to restiveness, to amazement, to wrath, to panic, to catalepsy, before Kedzie realized that he was being suffocated by these reminiscences. Then she intervened.

Mrs. Thropp's final cadence was a ghastly thought:

"Well, now, I've told you s'much about all our folks, you must tell me all about yours."

"The Lord forbid!" said Jim.

Mrs. Thropp took this to mean that he did not dare confess the scandals of his people. She knew, of course, from reading, that rich people are very wicked, but she did want to know some of the details.

Jim refused to make disclosures. He was wakened from his coma by Mrs. Thropp's casual remark:

"Say, Jimsy, how do folks do, on East here? Will your mother call on me and Kedzie, or will she look for us to call on her first?"

"My God!" thought Jim.

"What say?" said Mrs. Thropp.

Jim floundered and threshed. He had never before realized what his mother's famous pride might mean. She had always been only mother to him, devoted, tender, patient, forgiving, amusing, sympathetic, anxious, flattered by his least attention. Yet he had heard her spoken of as a human glacier for freezing social climbers and pushers of every sort. She was huge and slow; she could be frightfully cold and crushing.

Now he understood what congelation the trembling approachers to her majesty must have suffered. He was afraid to think what she would do to the Thropps. Her

first glance would turn them to icicles and her first word would snap them to bits.

It is hard enough for any mother to receive the news that her son is in love with any woman and wants to marry her. Mrs. Dyckman must learn that her adored child had transferred his loyalty to a foreigner, a girl she had never seen, could not conceivably have selected, and could never approve. Even the Prodigal Son, when he went home, did not bring a wife with him. Ten to one if he had brought one she would have got no veal—or if she got it she would not have cared for it.

Jim could not be blind even now in his alarm to Kedzie's intense prettiness, but seeing her as through his mother's eyes coldly, he saw for the first time the plebeiance of her grace.

If she had been strong and rugged her commonness would have had a certain vigor; but to be nearly refined without being quite refined is as harrowing as singing just a little off the key. To be far off the key is to be in another key, but to smite at a note and muff it is excruciation. Better far to drone middle C than to aim at high C and miss it by a comma.

Yet Jim understood that he could not long prevent the encounter of his wife and her relatives with his mother and her relatives. He could not be so boorishly insolent as to forbid the meeting, and he could not be so blind as to expect success. He got away at length on the pretext of making arrangements with his mother, who was a very busy woman, he said. Mrs. Thropp could not imagine why a rich woman should be busy, but she held her whist.

Jim was glad to escape, even on so gruesome an errand, and now when he kissed Kedzie good-by he had to kiss momma as well. He would almost rather have kissed poppa.

He entered his home in the late afternoon with the reluctance of boyhood days when he had slunk back after

some misdemeanor. He loathed his mission and himself and felt that he had earned a trouncing and a disinheritance.

He found his mother and father in the library playing, or rather fighting, a game of double Canfield. In the excitement of the finish they were like frantic children, tied in knots of hurry, squealing with emulation. The cards were coming out right, and the speedier of the two to play the last would score two hundred and fifty to the other's nothing.

Mrs. Dyckman was the more agile in snatching up her cards and placing them. Her eyes darted along the stacks with certainty, and she came in first by a lead of three cards.

Dyckman was puffing with exhaustion and pop-eyed from the effort to look in seven directions at once. It rendered him scarlet to be outrun by his wife, who was no Atalanta to look at. Besides, she always crowed over him insufferably when she won, and that was worse than the winning. When Jim entered the room she was laughing uproariously, pointing the finger of derision at her husband and crying:

"Where did you get a reputation as a man of brains? There must be an awful crowd of simpletons in Wall Street." Then she caught sight of her son and beckoned to him. "Come in and hold your father's head, Jimsy."

"Please don't call me Jimsy!" Jim exploded, prematurely.

His mother did not hear him, because his father exploded at the same moment:

"Come in and teach your mother how to be a sport. She won't play fair. She cheats all the time and has no shame when she gets caught. When she loses she won't pay, and when she wins she wants cash on the nail."

"Of course I do!"

"Why, there isn't a club in the country that wouldn't expel you twice a week."

"Well, pay me what you owe me, before you die of apoplexy."

"How much do I owe you?"

"Eight dollars and thirty-two cents."

"I do not! That's robbery. Look here: you omitted my score twice and added your own up wrong."

"Did I really?"

"Do five and two make nine?"

"Don't they?"

"They do not!"

"Well, must you have hydrophobia about it? What difference does it make?"

"It makes the difference that I only owe you three dollars and twenty-six cents."

"All right, pay it and simmer down. Isn't he wonderful, Jimsy? He just sent a check for ten thousand dollars to the fund for blind French soldiers and then begrudges his poor wife five dollars."

"But that's charity and this is cards: and it's humiliating to think that you haven't learned addition yet."

Mrs. Dyckman winked at Jim and motioned him to sit beside her. He could not help thinking of the humiliating addition he was about to announce to the family. While his father counted out the change with a miserly accuracy he winked his off eye at Jim and growled, with a one-sided smile:

"Where have you been for the past few days, and what mischief have you been up to? You have a guilty face."

But Mrs. Dyckman threw her great arm about his great shoulders, stared at him as she kissed him, and murmured: "You don't look happy. What's wrong?"

Jim scraped his feet along the floor gawkily and mumbled: "Well, I suppose I'd better tell you. I was going to break it to you gently, but I don't know how."

Mrs. Dyckman took alarm at once. "Break it gently? Bad news? Oh, Jim, you haven't gone and got yourself engaged to some fool girl, have you? Not that?"

"Worse than that, mother!"

"Oh dear! what could be worse? Only one thing, Jim! You haven't—you haven't married a circus-rider or a settlement-worker or anything like that, have you?"

"No."

"Lord! what a relief! I breathe again."

Jim fired off his secret without further delay. "I've been married, though."

"Married? Already? Married to what? Anybody I ever heard of?"

His mother was gasping in a dangerous approach to heart failure. Jim protested.

"You never saw her, but she's a very nice girl. You'll love her when you meet her."

Jim's father sputtered as he pulled himself out of his chair: "Wha-what's this? You—you damned young cub! You—why—what—who—oh, you jackass! You big, lumbering, brainless, heartless bonehead! Oh—whew! Look at your poor mother!"

Jim was frightened. She was pounding at her huge breast with one hand and clutching her big throat with another. Her husband whirled to a siphon, filled a glass with vichy, and gave it to Jim to hold to her lips while he ran to throw open a window.

Jim knelt by his mother and felt like Cain bringing home the news of the first crime. Her son's remorse was the first thing that Eve felt, no doubt; at least, it was the first that Mrs. Dyckman understood when the paroxysm left her. She felt so sorry for her lad that she could not blame him. She blamed the woman, of course. She cried awhile before she spoke; then she caressed Jim's cheeks and blubbered:

"But we mustn't make too much of a fuss about a little thing like a wedding. It's his first offense of the kind. I suppose he fell into the trap of some little devil with a pretty face. Poor innocent child, with no mother to protect him!"

"Poor innocent scoundrel!" old Dyckman snarled. "He probably got her into trouble, and she played on his sympathy."

This was what Jim sorely needed, some unjust accusation to spur him out of his shame. He sprang to his feet and confronted his father.

"Don't you dare say a word against my wife."

"Oh, look at him!" his father smiled. "He's grown so big he can lick his old dad. Well, let me tell you, my young jackanapes, that if anybody has said anything against your wife it was you."

"What have I said?"

"You've said that you married her secretly. You've not dared to let us see her first. You've not dared to announce your engagement and take her to the church like a gentleman. Why? Why? Answer me that, before you grow so tall. And who is she, anyway? I hear that you had a prize-fight with Peter Cheever and got expelled from the club."

"When did you hear that?"

"It's all over town. What was the fight about? Was he interested in this lady, too?"

One set of Jim's muscles leaped to the attack; another set held them in restraint.

"Be careful, dad!" he groaned. "Peter Cheever never met my wife."

"Well, then, what were you fighting him about?"

"That's my business."

"Well, it's my business, too, when I find the name of my son posted for expulsion on the board of my pet club. You used to be sweet on Cheever's wife. You weren't fighting about her, were you?"

This chance hit jolted the bridegroom so perceptibly that his father regretted having made it. He gasped:

"Great Lord, but you're the busy young man! Solomon in all his glory—"

"Let him alone now," Mrs. Dyckman broke in, "or

you'll have me on your hands." She needed only her husband's hostility to inflame her in defense of her son. "If he's married, he's married, and words won't divorce him. We might as well make the best of it. I've no doubt the girl is a darling, or Jim wouldn't have cared for her. Would you, Jimsy?"

"Naturally not," Jim agreed, with a rather sickly enthusiasm.

"Is she nice-looking?"

"She is famous for her beauty."

"Famous! Oh, Heavens! That sounds ominous. You mean she's well known?"

"Very—in certain circles."

"In certain circles!" Mrs. Dyckman was like a terrified echo. She had known of such appalling misalliances that there was no telling how far her son might have descended.

Old Dyckman snarled, "Do you mean that you've gone slumming for a wife?"

Jim dared not answer this. His mother ignored it, too. But her thoughts were in a panic.

"What circles is she famous in, your wife, for her beauty?"

Jim could not achieve the awful word "movies" at the moment. He prowled round it.

"In professional circles."

"Oh, an actress, then?"

"Well, sort of."

"They call everything an actress nowadays. She isn't a—a chorus-girl or a show-girl?"

"Lord, no!" His indignation was reassuring to a degree.

His father broke in again, "It might save a few hours of dodging and cross-examination if you'd tell us who and what she is."

"She is known professionally as Anita Adair."

So parochial a thing is fame that the title which millions

of people had learned to know and love meant absolutely nothing to the Dyckmans. They were so ignorant of the new arts that even Mary Pickford meant hardly more to them than Picasse or Matisse.

Jim brought out a photograph of Kedzie, a small one that he carried in his pocket-book for company. The problem of what she looked like distracted attention for the moment from the problem of what she did and was.

Mrs. Dyckman took the picture and perused it anxiously. Her husband leaned over her shoulder and studied it, too. He was mollified and won by the big, gentle eyes and that bee-stung upper lip. He grumbled:

"Well, you're a good chooser for looks, anyway. Sweet little thing."

Mrs. Dyckman examined the face more knowingly. She saw in those big, innocent eyes a serene selfishness and a kind of sweet ruthlessness. In the pouting lips she saw discontent and a gift for wheedling. But all she said was, "She's a darling."

Jim caught the knell-tone in her praise and feared that Kedzie was dead to her already. He saw more elegy in her sigh of resignation to fate and her resolution to take up her cross—the mother's cross of a pretty, selfish daughter-in-law.

"You haven't told us yet how she won her—fame, you said."

And now Jim had to tell it.

"She has had great success in the—the—er—pictures."

"She's a painter—an illustrator?"

"No, she—well—you know, the moving pictures have become very important; they're the fifth largest industry in the world, I believe, and—"

The silence of the parents was deafening. Their eyes rolled together and clashed, as it were, like cannon-balls meeting. Dyckman senior dropped back into his chair and whistled "Whew!" Then he laughed a little:

"Well, I'm sure we should be proud of our alliance with the fifth largest industry. The Dyckmans are coming up in the world."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Dyckman. She was thinking of the laugh that rival mothers would have on her. She was thinking of the bitterness of her other children, of her daughter who was a duchess in England, and of the squirming of her relatives-in-law. But she was too fond of her boy to mention her dreads. She passed on to the next topic.

"Where are you living?"

"Nowhere yet," Jim confessed. "We just got in from our—er—honeymoon this morning. We haven't decided what to do."

Then Mrs. Dyckman took one of those heroic steps she was capable of.

"You'd better bring her here."

"Oh no; she'd be in your way. She'd put you out."

"I hope not, not so soon," Mrs. Dyckman laughed, dismally. "She'll probably not like us at all, but we can start her off right."

"That's mighty white of you, mother."

"Did you expect me to be—yellow?"

"No, but I thought you might be a little—blue."

"If she'll make you happy I'll thank Heaven for her every day and night of my life. So let's give her every chance we can, and I hope she'll give us a chance."

Jim's arms were long enough to encircle her and hug her tight. He whispered to her, "I never needed you more, you God-blessed—mother!"

Her tears streamed down her cheeks upon his lips, and he had a little taste of the bitterness of maternal love. She felt better after she had cried a little, and she said, with courage:

"Now we mustn't keep you away from her. If you want me to, I'll go along with you and call on her and extend a formal invitation."

Jim could not permit his revered mother to make so complete a submission as that. He shook his head:

"That won't be necessary. I'll go get Kedzie."

"Kedzie? I thought her name was Anita."

"That was her stage name—her film name."

"Oh! And her name wasn't Adair, either, perhaps?"

"No, it was—er—Thropp!"

"Oh!" She wanted to say "What a pretty name!" to make it easier for him, but she could not arrange the words on her tongue. She asked, instead, "Is she American?"

"American? I should say so! Born in Missouri."

Another "Oh!" from the mother.

Jim swallowed a bit more of quinine and made his escape, saying:

"You're as fine as they make 'em, mother. I won't be gone long."

The father was so disgusted with the whole affair that he could only save himself from breaking the furniture by a sardonic taunt:

"Tell our daughter-in-law that if she wants to bring along her camera she can have the ballroom for a studio. We never use it, anyway."

"Shame on you!" his wife cried. "Don't mind him, Jimsy."

"Jimsy" reminded Jim of Mrs. Thropp and his promise to ask his mother to call on her. But he had confessed all that he could endure. He was glad to get away without letting slip the fact that "Thropp" had changed to "Dyckman" *via* "Gilfoyle."

His mother called him back for another embrace and then let him go. She had nowhere to turn for support but to her raging husband, and she found herself crying her eyes out in his arms. He had his own heartbreak and pridebreak, but he was only a man and no sympathy need be wasted on him. He wasted none on himself. He laughed ruefully.

"You were saying, mother, only awhile ago that you

wished he'd marry some nice girl. Well, he's married, and we'll have to take what he brings us. But, oh, these children, these damned children!"

A little later he was trying to brace himself and his wife against the future.

"After all, marriage is only an infernal gamble. We might have scoured the world and picked out an angel for him, and she might have run off with the chauffeur the second week. I guess I got the only real angel that's been captured in the last fifty years. The boy may have stumbled on a prize unbeknownst. We'll give the kid the benefit of the doubt, anyway. Won't we?"

"Of course, dear, if she'll give us the same."

"Well, Jim said she came from Missouri. We've got to show her."

"Ring for Wotton, will you?"

"What are you going to tell him?"

"The truth."

"Good Lord! Do you dare do that?"

"I don't dare not to. They'll find it out down-stairs quickly enough in their own way."

"I see. You want to beat 'em to it."

"Exactly."

For years the American world had been discussing the duty of parents to teach their children the things they must inevitably learn in uglier and more perilous ways. There were editorials on it, stories, poems, novels, numberless volumes. It even reached the stage. Mrs. Dyckman had left her own children to find things out for themselves. It occurred to her that she should not make the same mistake with the eager servants who gave the walls ears and the keyholes eyes.

It was a ferocious test of her courage, but she knew that she would have all possible help from Wotton. He had not only been the head steward of the family ship in countless storms, but he had an inherited knowledge of the sufferings of homes. He had learned his profession

as page to his father, who had been a butler and the son of a butler.

Wotton came in like a sweet old earl and waited while Mrs. Dyckman gathered strength to say as offhandedly as if she were merely announcing that Jim was arrested for murder:

"Oh, Wotton, I wanted to tell you that Mr. James Dyckman has just brought us the news of his marriage."

Wotton's eyebrows went up and his hands sought each other and whispered together as he faltered:

"Indeed, ma'am! That is a surprise, isn't it?"

"He has married a very brilliant young lady who has had great success in—ah—in the—ah—moving pictures."

The old man gulped a moment, but finally got it down. "The moving pictures! Indeed, ma'am! My wife and I are very fond of the—the movies, as the saying is."

"Everybody is, isn't they—aren't they? Perhaps you have seen Miss Anita Adair in the—er—pictures."

"Miss Anita Adair? Oh, I should say we 'ave! And is she the young lady?"

"Yes. They are coming to live with us for a time."

"Oh, that will be very pleasant! Quite an honor, you might say— That will make two extra at dinner, then?"

"Yes. No—that is, we were expecting Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler, but I wish you would telephone them that I am quite ill—not very, you understand—a bad cold, I think, would be best. Something to keep me to my room for the day."

"Very good, ma'am. Was there anything else?"

"No—oh yes—ask Mrs. Abby to have the Louis Seize room made ready, will you?"

"Very good—and some flowers, per'aps, I suppose."

"Yes."

"Thank you."

He shuffled out, bowed under the weight of the calamity, as if he had an invisible trunk on his back. He gathered the servants in solemn conclave in their sitting-room and

delivered a funeral oration over young Mr. Jim. There were tears in the eyes of the women-servants and curses in the throats of the men. They all adored Mr. Jim, and their recent pride in his triumph over Peter Cheever was turned to ashes. He had married into the movies! They supposed that he must have been drinkin' very 'ard. Jim's valet said:

"This is as good as handin' me my notice."

But, then, Dallam was a ratty soul and was for deserting a sinking ship. Wotton and the others felt that their loyalty was only now to be put to the test. They must help the old folks through it. There was one ray of hope: such marriages did not last long in America.

CHAPTER VII

JIM hastened to Kedzie, and she greeted him with anxiety. She saw by his radiant face that he brought cheerful news.

"I've seen mother," he exclaimed, "and she's tickled to death with your picture. She wants to see you right away. She wouldn't listen to anything but your coming right over to live at our house till we decide what we want to do."

Kedzie's heart turned a somersault of joy; then it flopped.

"I've got no clothes fit for your house."

"Oh, Lord!" Jim groaned. "What do you think we are, a continual reception? You can go out to-morrow and shop all you want to."

"We-ell, all ri-ight," Kedzie pondered.

Jim was taken aback at her failure to glow with his success; and when she said, "I hate to leave momma and poppa," he writhed.

He had neither the courage nor the inclination to invite them to come along and make a jolly house-party. There was room enough for a dozen Thropps in the big house, but he doubted if there were room in his mother's heart for three Thropps at a time, or for the elder Thropps at any time. After all, his mother had some rights. He protected them by lying glibly.

"My mother sent you her compliments, Mrs. Thropp, and said she would call on you as soon as she could. She's very busy, you know—as I told you. Well, come

along, Kedzie. I'd like to have you home in time for dinner."

"You dress for dinner, I suppose."

"Well, usually—yes."

"But I haven't—"

"If you dare say it, I'll murder you. What do they care what you've got on? They want to meet you, not your clothes."

She saw that he was in no mood to be trifled with; so she delayed only long enough to fling into a small trunk a few of her best duds. She remembered with sudden joy that Ferriday had made her a gift of one or two of the gowns Lady Powell-Carewe had designed for her camera-appearances, and she took them along for her début into the topmost world. Jim arranged by telephone for the transportation of her luggage, and they set out on their new and hazardous journey.

Kedzie bade her mother and father a farewell implying a beautiful distress at parting. She thought it looked well, and she felt that she owed to her mother her present splendor. She was horribly afraid, too, of the ordeal ahead of her. She was, indeed, approaching one of the most terrifying of duels: the first meeting of a mother and a wife.

Kedzie was not half so afraid as the elder Dyckmans were; for she had her youth and her beauty, and they were only a plain, fat old rich couple whose last remaining son had been stolen from them by a stranger who might take him from them altogether or fling him back at their feet with a ruined heart.

In her moving pictures Kedzie had played the millionairess many a time, had driven up in state to mansions, and been admitted by moving-picture butlers with frozen faces and only three or four working joints. She had played the millionairess in boudoir and banquet-hall; she had been loved by nice princes and had foiled wicked barons. She had known valets and grooms and footmen

familiarly; but they had all been moving-picture people, actors like herself.

As the motor approached the Dyckman palace she recalled what Ferriday had told her about how different real life in millionairedom was from studio luxury, and she almost wished she had stayed married to Tommie Gilfoyle.

In her terror she seized the usual armor that terror assumes—bluff. It would have been far better for her and everybody if she had entered meekly into the presence of the very human old couple at her approach, and had said to them, not in so many words, but at least by her simple manner:

"I did not select my birthplace or my parents, my soul or my body or my environment. I am not ashamed of them, but I want to make the best of them. I am a newcomer in your world and I am only here because your son happened to meet me and liked me and asked me to marry him. So excuse me if I am frightened and ill at ease. I don't want to take him away from you, but I want to love you as he does and have you love me as he does. So help me with your wisdom."

If she had brought such a message or implied it she would have walked right into the living-room of the parental hearts. But poor Kedzie lacked the genius and the inspiration of simplicity and frankness, and she marched up the steps in a panic which she disguised all too well in a pretense of scorn that proclaimed:

"I am as good as you are. I have been in dozens of finer homes than this. You can't teach me anything, you old snobs. I've got your son, and you'd better mind your p's and q's."

Wotton opened the door and put on as much of a wedding face as he could. Jim saw that the old man was informed, and he said:

"This is Wotton, my dear. He's the real head of the house."

Kedzie might better have shaken hands with him than have given him the curt nod she begrudged him. She looked past him to see Mrs. Dyckman, in whose arms she found herself smothered. Mrs. Dyckman, in her bride-fright, had rather rushed the situation.

Kedzie hardly knew what to do. She was overawed by the very bulk as well as the prestige of her mother-in-law. She did not quite dare to embrace Mrs. Dyckman, and she could think of nothing at all to say.

Mrs. Dyckman was impressed with Kedzie's beauty and paid it immediate tribute.

"Oh, but you are an exquisite thing! No wonder our boy is mad about you."

Kedzie's heart pranced at this, and she barely checked the giggle of triumph that bounded in her throat. But the only thing she could think of was what she dared not say: "So you're the famous Mrs. Dyckman! Why, you're fatter than momma." She said nothing, but wore one of her most popular smiles, that look of wistful sweetness that had melted countless of her movie worshipers.

She was caught from Mrs. Dyckman's shadow by Jim's father, who said, "Don't I get a kiss?" and took one. Kedzie returned this kiss and found the old gentleman very handsome, not in the least like her father. Brides almost always get along beautifully with fathers-in-law. And so do sons-in-law. Women will learn how to get along together better as soon as it ceases to be so important to them how they get along together.

After the thrill of the first collision the four stood in silenced embarrassment till Jim, eager to escape, said:

"What room do we get?"

"Cicely's, if you like," his mother answered.

Jim was pleased. Cicely was the duchess of the family, and she and her duke had occupied that room before they went to England. Cicely was a war nurse now, bedabbled in gore, and her husband was a mud-daubed major in the trenches along the Somme. Jim saw that his

mother was making no stint of her hospitality, and he was grateful.

He dragged Kedzie away. She was trying to take in the splendor of the house without seeming to, and she went up the stairway with her eyes rolling frantically.

In the Academy at Venice is that famous picture of Titian's representing the little Virgin climbing up the steps of the Temple, a pathetic, frightened figure bearing no trace of the supreme radiance that was to be hers. There was something of the same religious awe in Kedzie's heart as she mounted the steps of the house that was a temple in her religion. She was going up to her heaven already. It was perfection because it was the next thing.

When Kedzie reaches the scriptural heaven, if she does (and it will be hard for Anybody to deny her anything that she sets her heart on), she will be happy till she gets there and finds that she is only in the first of the seven heavens. But what will the poor girl do when she goes on up and up and up and learns at last that there is no eighth? She will weep like another Alexander the Great, because there are no more heavens to hope for.

Jim led her into the best room there was up-stairs, and told her that a duke had slept there. At first she was thrilled through. Later it would occur to her, not tragically, yet a bit quellingly, that, after all, she had not married a duke herself, but only a commoner. She had as much right to a title as any other American girl. A foreign title is part of a Yankee woman's birthright. Hundreds of women had acquired theirs. Kedzie got only a plain "Mr."

Still, she told herself that she must not be too critical, and she let her enthusiasm fly. She did not have to pose before Jim, and she ran about the suite as about a garden.

CHAPTER VIII

KEDZIE was smitten with two facts: the canopied bed was raised on a platform, and the marble bath-tub was sunk in the floor. She sat on the bed and bounced up and down on the springs. She stared up at the tasseled baldachin with its furled draperies, and fingered the lace covering and the silken comforter.

She sat in the best chairs, studied the dressing-table with its royal equipment. She went to the window and gazed out into Fifth Avenue, reviewing its slow-flowing lava of humanity—young royalty overlooking her subjects.

Mrs. Abby, the housekeeper, knocked and came in to be presented to the new Princess of Wales, and to present the personal maid who had been assigned to her. Even Mrs. Dyckman was afraid of Mrs. Abby, who lacked the suavities of Wotton. Mrs. Abby gave Kedzie the chill of her life, and Kedzie responded with an ardent hatred.

The maid, a young Frenchwoman, found her black dress with its black silk apron an appropriate uniform, since her father, three brothers, a dozen cousins, and two or three of her sweethearts were at the wars. Some of them were dead, she knew, and the others were on their way along the red stream that was bleeding France white, according to German hopes.

Liliane, being a foreigner, saw in Kedzie the pathos of the alien, and with the unequaled democracy of the French, forgave her her plebeiance for that sake. She welcomed Kedzie's beauty, too, and regarded her as a doll of the finest ware, whom it would be fascinating to dress up. Kedzie and Liliane would prosper famously.

Liliane resolved that when Kedzie appeared at dinner she should reflect credit not only on "Monsieur Zheem," but on Liliane as well. When Kedzie's trunk arrived and Liliane drew forth the confections of Lady Powell-Carewe she knew that she had all the necessary weapons for a sensation.

Kedzie felt more aristocracy in being fluttered over by a French maid with an accent than in anything she had encountered yet. Liliane's phrase "Eef madame pair-meet" was a constant tribute to her distinction.

Jim retired to his own dressing-room and faced the veiled contempt of his valet, leaving Kedzie to the ministrations of Liliane, who drew the tub and saw that it was just hot enough, sprinkled the aromatic bath-salts, and laid out the towels and Kedzie's things.

Women are born linen-lovers, and Kedzie was not ashamed to have even a millionaire maid see the things she wore next to her skin, and Liliane was delighted to find by this secret wardrobe that her new mistress was beautifully equipped.

She waited outside the door till Kedzie had stepped from the fragrant pool—then came in to aid in the harnessing. She saw nothing but the successive garments and had those ready magically. She laced the stays and slid the stockings on and locked the garters and set the slippers in place. She was miraculously deft with Kedzie's hair, and her suggestions were the last word in tact. Then she fetched the dinner-gown, floated it about Kedzie as delicately as if it were a ring of smoke, hooked it, snapped it, and murmured little compliments that were more tonic than cocktails.

When Jim came in he was struck aglow by Kedzie's comeliness and by a certain authority she had. Liliane pointed to her, as an artist might point to a canvas with which he has had success, and demanded his admiration. His eyes paid the tribute his lips stammered over.

Kedzie was incandescent with her triumph, and she went down the stairway to collect her dues.

Her parents-in-law were waiting, and she could see how tremendously they were impressed and relieved by her grace. What did it matter who she was or whence she came? She was as irresistible as some haunting phrase from a folk-song, its authorship unknown and unimportant, its perfection inspired.

Kedzie floated into the dining-room and passed the gantlet of the servants. Ignoring them haughtily, she did not ignore the sudden change of their scorn to homage. Nothing was said or done; yet the air was full of her victory. Much was forgiven her for her beauty, and she forgave the whole household much because of its surrender.

It was a family dinner and not elaborate. Mr. and Mrs. Dyckman had arrived at the stage when nearly everything they liked to eat or drink was forbidden to them. Jim had an athlete's appetite for simples, and Kedzie had an actress' dread of fattening things and sweets. There was a procession of dishes submitted to her inspection, but seeing them refused first by Mrs. Dyckman, she declined most of them in her turn.

Kedzie had been afraid that she would blunder in choice among a long array of forks, but she escaped the test, since each course was accompanied by the tools to eat it with. There was a little champagne to toast the bride in.

She found the grandeur of the room belittling to the small party at table. There were brave efforts to make her feel at home and brief sallies of high spirits, but there was no real gaiety. How could there be, when there was no possible congeniality? The elder couple had lived in a world unknown to Kedzie. Their son had dazed them by his sudden return with a strange captive from beyond the pale. She was a pretty barbarian, but a barbarian she was, and no mistake. She was not so barbaric as they had feared, but they knew nothing of her past or of her.

It is not good manners to deal in personal questions;

yet how else could such strangers come to know one another? The Dyckmans were afraid to quiz her about herself, and she dared not cross-examine them. They had no common acquaintances or experiences to talk over. The presence of the servants was depressing, and when the long meal was over and the four Dyckmans were alone in the drawing-room, they were less at ease than before. They had not even knives and forks to play with.

Mrs. Dyckman said at length, "Are you going to the theater, do you think?"

Jim did not care—or dare—to take his bride abroad just yet. He shook his head. Mrs. Dyckman tried again:

"Does your wife play—or sing, perhaps?"

"No, thank you," said Kedzie, and sank again.

Mrs. Dyckman was about to ask if she cared for cards, but she was afraid that she might say yes. She grew so desperate at last that she made a cowardly escape:

"I think we old people owe it to you youngsters to leave you alone." She caught up her husband with a glance like a clutching hand, and he made haste to follow her into the library.

Jim and Kedzie looked at each other sheepishly. Kedzie was taking her initiation into the appalling boredom that can close down in a black fog on the homes and souls of the very wealthy. She was astounded and terrified to realize that there is no essential delight attending the possession of vast means. Later she was to find herself often one of large and glittering companies where nothing imaginable was lacking to make one happy except the power to be happy. She would go to dinners where an acute melancholia seemed to poison the food, where people of the widest travel and unfettered opportunities could find nothing to say to one another.

If she had loved Jim more truly, or he her, they could have been blissful in spite of their lack of hardships; but the excitement of flirtation had gone out of their

lives. There seemed to be nothing more to be afraid of except unhappiness. There seemed to be nothing to be excited about at all. Time would soon provide them with wild anxieties, but he withheld his hand for the moment.

Jim saw that Kedzie was growing restless. He dragged himself from his chair and clasped her in his arms, but the element of pity in his deed took all the fire out of it. He led her about the house and showed her the pictures in the art gallery, but she knew nothing about painters or paintings, and once around the gallery finished that room for her forever. There were treasures in the library to fascinate a bibliophile for years, but Kedzie knew nothing and cared less about books as books: and a glance into the somber chamber where the old people played cards listlessly drove her from that door.

The dinner had begun at eight and finished at half past nine. It was ten o'clock now, and too late to go to the theater. The opera season was over. There would be the dancing-places, but neither of the two felt vivacity enough for dancing or watching others dance.

For lack of anything better, Jim proposed a drive. He was mad for air and exercise. He would have preferred a long walk, and so would Kedzie, but she could not have walked far without changing her costume and her slippers.

She was glad of the chance to escape from the house. Jim rang for Wotton and asked to have a car brought round. They put on light wraps and went down the steps to the limousine.

The Avenue was lonely and the Park was lonelier. And, strangely, now that they were together in the dark they felt happier; they drew more closely together. They were common people now, and they had moonlight and stars, a breeze and a shadowy landscape; they shared them with the multitude, and they were happy for a while.

Something in Kedzie's heart whispered: "What's the use of being rich? What's the good of living in a palace

with a gang of servants hanging over your shoulder? Happiness evidently doesn't come from ordering whatever you want, for by the time somebody brings it to you you don't want it any longer. Happiness must be the going after something yourself and being anxious about it."

If she had listened to that airy whisperer she might have had an inkling of a truth. But she dismissed philosophy as something stupid. She turned into Jim's arms like a child afraid and clung to him, moaning:

"Jim, what do I want? Tell me. I'm bluer than blue, and I don't know why."

This was sufficiently discouraging for Jim. He had given the petulant child the half of his kingdom, and she was blue. If anything could have made him bluer than he was it would have been this proclamation of his failure. He had done the honorable thing, and it had profited nobody.

He petted her as one pets a spoiled and fretful child at the end of a long, long rainy day, with a rainy to-morrow ahead.

When they returned home the coziness of their hour together was lost. The big mansion was as cozy as a court-house. It no longer had even novelty. Climbing the steps had no further mystery than the Louvre has to an American tourist who has promenaded through it once.

Her room was brilliant and beautiful, but the things she liked about it most were the homely, comfortable touches: her bedroom slippers by her chair, her nightgown laid across her pillow, and the turned-down covers of the bed.

Liliane knocked and came in, and Jim retreated. It was pleasant for the indolent Kedzie to have the harness taken from her. She yawned and stretched and rubbed her sides when her corsets were off, and when her things were whisked from sight and she was only Kedzie Thropp alone in a nightgown she was more nearly glad than she had been for ever so long.

She flung her hair loose and ran about the room. She sang grotesquely as she brushed her teeth and scumbled her face with cold-cream, rubbed it in and rubbed it out again. She was so glad to be a mere girl in her own flesh and not much else that she went about the room crooning to herself. She peeked out of the window at the Avenue, as quiet as a country lane at this hour, save for the motors that slid by as on skees and the jog-trot of an occasional hansom-horse.

She was crooning when she turned to see her husband come in in a great bath-robe; he might have been a solemn monk, save for the big cigar he smoked.

He was so dour that she laughed and ran to him and flung him into a chair and clambered into his lap and throttled him in her arms, crying:

"Oh, Jim, I am happy. I love you and you love me. Don't we? Say we do!"

"Of course we do," he laughed, not quite convinced.

He could not resist her beauty, her warmth, her ingratiation. But somehow he could not love her soul.

He had refused to make her his mistress before they were married. Now that they were married, that was all he could make of her. Their life together was thenceforward the life of such a pair. He squandered money on her and let her squander it on herself. They had ferocious quarrels and ferocious reconciliations, periods of mutual aversion and tempests of erotic extravagance, excursions of hilarious good-fellowship, hours of appalling boredom.

But there was a curious dishonesty about their relation: it was an intrigue, not a communion. They were never closer to each other than a reckless flirtation. Sometimes that seemed to be enough for Kedzie. Sometimes she seemed to flounder in an abyss of gloomy discontent.

But sleep was sweet for her that first night in the bed where the duchess had lain. She had an odd dream that she also became a duchess. Her dreams had a way of coming true.

CHAPTER IX

SO there lay Kedzie Thropp of Nimrim, Missouri, the Girl Who Had Never Had Anything. At her side was the Man Who Had Always Had Everything. Under this canopy a duke and duchess had lain.

There was an element of faery in it; yet far stranger things have happened and will happen anew.

There was once a Catholic peasant of Lithuania who died of the plague, leaving a baby named Martha Skovronsky. A Protestant preacher adopted the waif, and while she was yet a girl got rid of her by marrying her to a common Swedish soldier, a sergeant. The Russians bombarded the town; the Swedes fled; and a Russian soldier captured the deserted wife in the ruins of the city. He passed her on to his marshal. The marshal sold her as a kind of white slave to a prince; the prince took her to Russia as his concubine. Being of a liberal disposition, he shared her capacious heart with the young czar, who happened to be married. Martha Skovronsky bore him a daughter and won his heart for keeps. He had her baptized in the Russian Church as Catherine. He divorced his czaritza that he might marry the foundling. He set on his bride's head the imperial crown studded with twenty-five hundred gems. She became the Empress Catherine I. of Russia and went to the wars with her husband, Peter the Great, saved him from surrendering to the Turks, and made a success of a great defeat for him.

He loved her so well that when she was accused of flirting with another man he had the gentleman decapitated and his head preserved in a jar of alcohol as a mantel

ornament for Catherine's room. When he died she reigned in his stead, recalling to her side as a favorite the prince who had purchased her when she was a captive.

Alongside such a fantastic history, the rise of Kedzie Thropp was petty enough. It did not even compare with the rocket-flight of that Theodosia who danced naked in a vile theater in Byzantium and later became the empress of the great Justinian.

Kedzie had never done anything very immoral. She had been a trifle immodest, according to strict standards, when she danced the Grecian dances. She had been selfish and hard-hearted, but she had never sold her body. And there is no sillier lie, as there is no commoner lie, than the trite old fallacy of the popular novels, sermons, editorials, and other works of fiction that women succeed by selling their bodies. It is one of the best ways a girl can find for going bankrupt, and it leads oftener to the dark streets than to the bright palaces.

The credit for Kedzie's staying virtuous, as the word is used, was not entirely hers. Probably if all the truth were known women are no oftener seduced than seducing. Kedzie might have gone wrong half a dozen times at least if she had not somehow inspired in the men she met a livelier sense of protection than of spoliation. She happened not to be a frenzied voluptuary, as are so many of the lost, who are victims of their own physiological or pathological estates before they make fellow-victims of the men they encounter.

The trick of success for a woman who has no other stock in trade than her charm is to awaken the chivalry of men, to promise but not relinquish the last favors till the last tributes are paid.

Meanwhile the old world is rolling into the daylight when women will sell their wits instead of their embraces, and when there will be no more compulsion for a woman to rent her body to pay her house rent than for men to do the same. The pity of it is that these great purifying, equaliz-

ing, freedom-spreading revolutions are gaining more opposition than help from the religious and the conservative.

In any case Kedzie Thropp, who slept under a park bench when first she came to town, found the city honorable, merciful, generous, as most girls do who have graces to sell and sense enough to set a high price on them.

And so Kedzie was sheltered and passed on upward by Skip Magruder the lunch-room waiter, and by Mr. Kalteyer the chewing-gum purveyor, by Eben E. Kiam the commercial photographer, by Thomas Gilfoyle the advertising bard, by Ferriday the motion-picture director, on up and up to Jim Dyckman. Every man gave her the best help he could. And even the women she met unconsciously assisted her skyward.

But there is always more sky above, and Kedzie's motto was a relentless *Excelsior!* She spurned backward the ladders she rose by, and it was her misfortune (which made her fortune) that whatever rung she stood on hurt her pretty, restless feet. It was inevitable that when at last she was bedded in the best bed in one of America's most splendid homes, she should fall a-dreaming of foreign splendors beyond the Yankee sky.

On the second morning of her honeymoon, when Kedzie woke to find that she was no duchess, but a plain American "Mrs." that disappointment colored her second impression of the Dyckman mansion.

She had her breakfast in bed. But she had enjoyed that dubious luxury in her own flat. Many poor and lazy and sick people had the same privilege. The things she had to eat were exquisitely cooked and served, when Liliane took them from the footman at the door and brought them to the bedside.

But, after all, there is not much difference between the breakfasts of the rich and of the poor. There cannot be: one kind of fruit, a cereal, an egg or two, some coffee, and some bread are about all that it is safe to put into the morning stomach. Her plutocratic father-in-law was not

permitted to have even that much, and her mother-in-law, who was one of the converts to Vance Thompson's *Eat and Grow Thin* scriptures, had almost none at all.

Busy and anxious days followed that morning. There was a great amount of shopping to do. There were the wedding-announcement cards to order and the list of recipients to go over with Mrs. Dyckman's secretary. There was a secretary to hire for Kedzie, and it was no easy matter for Kedzie to put herself into the woman's hands without debasing her pride too utterly.

There was the problem of dinners to relatives, a reception to guests for the proper exploitation of the new Mrs. Dyckman. There was the embarrassment of meeting people who brought their prejudices with their visiting-cards and did not leave their prejudices as they did their cards.

The newspapers had to have their say, and they did not make pleasant reading to any of the Dyckmans. Kedzie took a little comfort from reading what the papers had to say about Mrs. Cheever's divorce, but she found that Jim was unresponsive to her gibes. This did not sweeten her heart toward Charity.

Kedzie was hungry for friends and playmates, but she could not find them among the new acquaintances she made. She saw curiosity in all their eyes, patronage in those who were cordial, and insult in those who were not effusive. She got along famously with the men, but their manner was not quite satisfactory, either. There was a corrosive something in their flattery, a menace in their approach.

There were the horrible experiences when Mrs. Dyckman called on Mrs. Thropp and the worse burlesque when Mrs. Thropp called on Mrs. Dyckman. The servants had a glorious time over it, and Kedzie overheard Mrs. Dyckman's report of the ordeal to her husband. She was angry at Mrs. Dyckman, but angrier still at her mother.

Kedzie's father and mother were an increasing annoyance to Kedzie's pride and her peace. They wanted to

get out to Nimrim and make a triumph through the village. And Jim and Kedzie were glad to pay the freight. But once the Thropps had gloated they were anxious to get back again to the flesh-pots of New York.

The financing of the old couple was embarrassing. It did not look right to Kedzie to have the father and mother of Mrs. Dyckman a couple of shabby, poor relations, and Kedzie called it shameful that her father, who was a kind of father-in-law-in-law to the duchess, should earn a pittance as a claim-agent in the matter of damaged pigs and things.

Jim, like all millionaires, had dozens of poor relations and felt neither the right nor the obligation to enrich them all. There is no gesture that grows tiresome quicker than the gesture of shoving the hand into the cash-pocket, bringing it up full and emptying it. There is no more painful disease than money-spender's cramp.

Kedzie learned, too, that to assure her father and mother even so poor an income as five thousand dollars a year would require the setting aside of a hundred thousand dollars at least in gilt-edged securities. She began to have places where she could put a hundred thousand dollars herself. On her neck was one place, for she saw a woman with a dog-collar of that price, and it made Kedzie feel absolutely nude in contrast. She met old Mrs. Noxon with her infamously costly stomacher on, and Kedzie cried that night because she could not have one for her own midriff.

Jim growled, "When you get a stomach as big as Mrs. Noxon's you can put a lamp-post on it."

She said he was indecent, and a miser besides.

Meanwhile her own brothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts were calling her a miser, a snob, a brute. The whole family wanted to move to New York and make a house-party. They had every right to, too, for did not the Declaration of Independence make all Americans equal?

Relatives whom Kedzie had never heard of and relatives

whom she knew all too well turned up in New York with schemes for extracting money from the Dyckman hoard. Kedzie grew nearly wroth enough to stand at the window and empty things on them as they dared to climb the noble steps with their ignoble impertinences.

When she was not repelling repulsive relatives Kedzie was trying to dodge old acquaintances. It seemed that everybody she had ever met had learned of her rise in the world. Her old landladies wrote whining letters. Moving-picture people out of a job asked her for temporary loans.

But the worst trial came one day when she was present at a committee meeting for a war-relief benefit and that fiend of a Pet Bettany proposed that one of the numbers should be Miss Silsby's troupe of Greek dancers. She asked if anybody had any objections, and when nobody spoke she turned to Kedzie and dared to ask her if she had ever seen the dancers.

"Not recently," Kedzie mumbled, while her very legs blushed under their stockings, remembering how bare they had been in the old days when she was one of the Silsby slaves.

All the other women simmered pleasantly in the uncomfortable situation till Mrs. Charity Cheever, who chanced to be there, came to the rescue amazingly by turning the tables on the Bettany creature:

"Anybody who ever saw you in a bathing-suit, Pet, would know that there were two good reasons why you were never one of the Silsbies."

Charity could be cruel to be kind. Everybody roared at Pet, whose crooked shanks had kept her modest from the knees down, at least. Kedzie wanted to kiss Charity, but she suffered too much from the reminder of her past.

She fiercely wanted to have been born of an aristocratic family. Of all the vain wishes, the retroactive pluperfect are the vainest, and an antenatal wish is sublimely ridiculous. But Kedzie wished it. This was one of the wishes she did not get.

CHAPTER X

MRS. KEDZIE DYCKMAN received many jars of ointment, but her pretty eyes found a fly in every one. She that should have gone about boasting, "I came from a village and slept under a park bench, and now look at me!" was slinking about, wishing that she could rather say: "Oh, see my wonderful ancestors! Without them you could not see me at all."

Kedzie had her picture printed at last in the "Social World" departments of the newspapers. She had full-page portraits of herself by the mystic Dr. Arnold Genthe and by other camera-masters printed in *Town and Country* and *The Spur, Vanity Fair, Vogue,* and *Harper's Bazar.* But some cursed spite half the time led to the statement under her picture that she had been in the movies. No adjectives of praise could sweeten that. Small wonder she pouted!

And she found the competition terrific. She had thought that when she got into the upper world she would be on a sparsely populated plateau. But she said to Jim:

"Good Lord! this is a merry-go-round! It's so crowded everybody is falling off."

The most "exclusive" restaurants were packed like bargain-counters. She went to highly advertised balls where there were so many people that the crowd simply oozed and the effort to dance or to eat was a struggle for life.

New York's four hundred families had swollen, it seemed, to four hundred thousand, and the journals of society published countless pictures of the aristocratic

sets of everywhere else. There were aristocrats of the Long Island sets—a dozen sets for one small island—the Berkshire set, the Back Bay set, the Rhode Island reds, the Plymouth Rock fowl, the old Connecticut connections, the Bar Harbor oligarchy, the Tuxedonians, the Morristown and Germantown noblesse, the pride of Philadelphia, the Baltimorioles, the diplomatic cliques of Washington, the Virginia patricians, the Piedmont Hunt set, the North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and all the other State sets, the Cleveland coteries, the Chicagocracy, the St. Louis and New Orleans and San Francisco optimates.

Exclusiveness was a joke. And yet Kedzie felt lonely and afraid. She had too many rivals. There were young girls in myriads, beauties by the drove, sirens in herds, millionaires in packs. The country was so prosperous with the privilege of selling Europe the weapons of suicide that the vast destructiveness of the German submarines was a bagatelle.

There was a curious mixture of stupendous Samaritanism and tremendous indifference. Millions were poured into charities and millions were squandered on dissipation.

Kedzie's funds were drawn away astoundingly faster than even Dyckman could replenish them. Hideous accounts of starving legions were brandished before the eyes of all Americans. Every day Kedzie's mail contained circulars about blind soldiers, orphan-throngs, bread-lines in every nation at war. There were hellish chronicles of Armenian women and children driven like cattle from desert to desert, outraged and flogged and starved by the thousand.

The imagination gave up the task. The miseries of the earth were more numerous than the sands, and the eyes came to regard them as impassively as one looks at the night sky without pausing to count the flakes in that snowstorm of stars. One says, "It is a nice night." One said,

"These are terrible times." Then one said, "May I have the next dance?" or, "Isn't supper ready yet?"

Kedzie tried for a while to lift herself from the common ruck of the aristocracy by outshining the others in charities and in splendors. She soon grew weary of the everlasting appeals for money to send to Europe. She grew weary of writing checks and putting on costumes for bazaars, spectacles, parades, and carnivals. She found herself circumscribed by so much altruism. Her benevolences left her too little for her magnificences.

She grew frantic for more fun and more personal glory. The extravagance of other women dazed her. Some of them had inexhaustible resources. Some of them were bankrupting their own boodle-bag husbands. Some of them flourished ingeniously by running up bills and never running them down.

The competition was merciless. She kept turning to Jim for money. He grew less and less gracious, because her extravagances were more and more selfish. He grew less and less superior to complaints. He started bank-accounts to get rid of her, but she got rid of them with a speed that frightened him. He hated to be used.

Kedzie took umbrage at Mrs. Dyckman's manner. Mrs. Dyckman tried for a while to be good to the child, strove to love her, forgave her for her youth and her humble origin; but finally she tired of her, because Kedzie was not making Jim's life happier, more useful, or more distinguished.

Then one day Mrs. Dyckman asked Kedzie for a few moments of her time. Kedzie was in a hurry to an appointment at her hairdresser's, but she seated herself patiently. Mrs. Dyckman said:

"My dear, I have just had a cable from my daughter Cicely. She has broken down, and her physician has ordered her out of England for a rest. She is homesick, she says, and Heaven knows we are homesick for her.

"I am afraid she would not feel at home in any room

but her old one, and I know you won't mind. You can have your choice. Some of the other rooms are really pleasanter. Will you look them over and let me know, so that I can have your things moved?"

"Certainly, my dear m'mah!" said Kedzie.

She walked blindly down the Avenue, snubbing her most precious acquaintances. She was being put out of her room! She was being shoved back to the second place. They'd ask her to eat at the second table next, or have her meals in her room as the secretaries did.

Not much! Having slept in a duchess's bed, Kedzie would not backslide. She would get a bed of her own. She remembered a nice young man she had met, whose people were in real estate. She telephoned to him from the Biltmore.

"Is that you, Polly? This is Kedzie Dyckman. Say, Polly, do you know of a decent house that is for sale or rent right away quick? Oh, I don't care how much it costs, so it's a crackerjack of a house. I suppose I've got to take it furnished, being in such a hurry; or could you get a gang of decorators in and do a rush job? All right, look up your list right away and telephone me here at the hairdresser's."

From under her cascade of hair she talked to him later and arranged to be taken from place to place. She now dismissed châteaux with contempt as too small, too old-fashioned, lacking in servants' rooms, what not. She had quite forgotten the poor little Mrs. Gilfoyle she had been, and her footsore tramp from cheap flat to cheap flat, ending in the place that cost three hundred dollars a year furnished.

She finally decided not to attempt housekeeping yet awhile, and selected a double-decked apartment of twenty-four rooms and forty-eight baths. And she talked the agent down to a rental of ten thousand dollars a year unfurnished. She would show Jim that she could economize.

When Kedzie told Mrs. Dyckman that she had decided to move, Mrs. Dyckman was very much concerned lest Kedzie feel put out. But she smiled to herself: she knew her Kedzie.

Jim was not at all pleased with the arrangement, but he yielded. In the American family the wife is the quartermaster, selects the camp and equips it. Jim spent more of his time at his clubs than at his duplex home. So did Kedzie. She had been railroaded into the Colony and one or two other clubs before they knew her so well.

When the Duchess Cicely came back Kedzie was invited to the family dinner, of course. Cicely was Kedzie's first duchess, and though Kedzie had met any number of titled people by now, she approached this one with strange apprehensions. She was horribly disappointed. Cicely turned out to be a poor shred of a woman in black, worn out, meager, forlorn, broken in heart and soul with what she had been through.

She was plainly not much impressed with Kedzie, and she said to her mother later: "Poor Jim, he always plays in the rottenest luck, doesn't he? Still, he's got a pretty doll, and what does anything matter nowadays?"

She tried to be polite about the family banquet. But the food choked her. She had seen so many gaunt hands pleading upward for a crust of bread. She had seen so many shriveled lips guzzling over a bowl of soup. She had seen so many once beautiful soldiers who had nothing to eat anything with.

Cicely apologized for being such a death's head at the feast, but she was ashamed of her people, ashamed of her country for keeping out of the war and fattening on it. All the motives of pacifism, of neutrality, of co-operation by financing and munitioning the war, were foul in her eyes. She knew only her side of the conflict, and she cared for no other. She found America craven and indifferent either to its own obligations or its own dangers. She accused the United States of basking in the protection

of the British navy and the Allied armies. She felt that the immortal crime of the *Lusitania* with its flotsam of dead women and children was more disgraceful to the nation that endured it than to the nation that committed it. She was very, very bitter, and Kedzie found her most depressing company, especially for a dinner-table.

But she excited Jim Dyckman tremendously. He broke out into fierce diatribes against the Chinafying of the United States with its Lilliputian army guarding its gigantic interests. He began to toy with the idea of enlisting in the Canadian army or of joining the American aviators flying for France.

"The national bird is an eagle," he said, with unwonted poesy, "and the best place an American eagle can fly is over France."

When Kedzie protested: "But you've got a family to consider. Let the single men go," Jim laughed louder and longer than he had laughed for weeks.

Cicely smiled her first smile and squeezed Jim's hand.

CHAPTER XI

KEDZIE went home early. It was depressing there, too. Now that she had a house of her own, she found an extraordinary isolation in it. Almost nobody called.

When she lived under the Dyckman roof she was included in the cards left by all the callers; she was invited into the drawing-room to meet them; she was present at all the big and little dinners, and breakfasts and teas and suppers.

People who wanted to be asked to more of the Dyckman meals and parties swapped meals and parties with them and included Kedzie in their invitations, since she was one of the family. She went about much in stately homes, and her name was celebrated in what the newspapers insist upon calling the "exclusive" circles.

Kedzie laughed at the extraordinary inclusiveness of their High Exclusivenesses until she got her own home. And then she learned its bitter meaning. It was not that Mrs. Dyckman meant to freeze her out. She urged her to "come in any time." But, as Kedzie told Jim, "an invitation to come any time is an invitation to stay away all the time." Kedzie's pride kept her aloof. She made it so hard to get her to come that Mrs. Dyckman sincerely said to Cicely:

"We are too old and stupid for the child. She is glad to be rid of us."

Mrs. Dyckman planned to call often, but she was an extremely busy woman, doing many good works and many foolish works that were just as hard. She said, "I ought to call," and failed to call, just as one says,

"I ought to visit the sick," and leaves them to their supine loneliness.

Thus Kedzie floated out of the swirling eddies where the social driftwood jostled in eternal circles. She sulked and considered the formalities of who should call on whom and who owed whom a call. New York life had grown too busy for anybody to pay much attention to the older reciprocities of etiquette.

Almost nobody called on Kedzie. She took a pride in smothering her complaints from Jim, who was not very much alive to her hours. He was busy, too. He had joined the Seventh Regiment of the New York National Guard, and it absorbed a vast amount of his time. He had gone to the Plattsburg encampment the summer before and had kept up with the correspondence-school work in map problems, and finally he had obtained a second lieutenancy in the Seventh Regiment. It was his little protest against the unpreparedness of the nation as it toppled on the brink of the crater where the European war boiled and smoked.

One midnight after a drill he found Kedzie crying bitterly. He took her in his arms, and his tenderness softened her pride so that she wept like a disconsolate baby and told him how lonely she was. Nobody called; nobody invited her out; nobody took her places. She had no friends, and her husband had abandoned her for his old regiment.

He was deeply touched by her woe and promised that he would take better care of her. But his military engagements were not elastic. He dared not neglect them. They took more and more of his evenings and invaded his days. Besides, he was poor company for Kedzie's mood. He had little of the humming-bird restlessness, and he could not keep up with her flights. She had darted her beak into a flower, and its nectar was finished for her before she had realized that it was a flower.

He felt that what she needed was friends of her own sex.

There were women enough who would accept Kedzie's company and gad with her, vie with her quivering speed. But they were not the sort he wanted her to fly with. He wanted her to make friends with the Charity Coe type.

The next day Jim grew desperate enough to call on Charity. She was out, but expected in at any moment. He sat down to wait for her. The room, the books, the piano—all spoke of her lovingly and lovably. He went to the piano and found there the song she had played for him once in Newport—"Go, Lovely Rose!"

He thought it a marvelous coincidence that it should be there on the rack. Like most coincidences, this was not hard to explain. It chanced to be there because Charity played it often. She was lonelier than Kedzie and almost as helpless to amuse herself. She read vastly, but the stories of other people's unhappy loves were a poor anodyne for her own. She thought incessantly of Jim Dyckman. Remembering the song she had played for him, and his bitter comment on the verse, "Tell her that wastes her time and me," she hunted it out, and the plaintive chimes of Carpenter's music made a knell for her own hopes.

She had played it this very afternoon and wrought herself to such sardonic regret that she forced herself into the open air. She walked a mile or two, but slunk back home again to be rid of the crowds.

She was thinking of Dyckman when she entered her house. She let herself in with her own key, and, walking into the drawing-room, surprised him at the piano, reading the tender elegy of the rose.

"Jim!" she gasped.

"Charity!" he groaned.

Their souls seemed to rush from their bodies and embrace. But their bodies stood fast before the abyss that gaped between them.

She whipped off her glove before she gave him her hand. That meeting of the flesh was so bitter-sweet that their

hands unclasped guiltily by a kind of honest instinct of danger.

"What on earth brought you here?" Charity faltered.

"Why—I— Well, you see—it's like this." He groped for words, but, having no genius in invention, he blurted the truth helplessly: "I came to ask you if you wouldn't—You see, my poor wife isn't making out very well with people—she's lonesome—and blue—and—why can't you lend a hand and make friends with her?"

Charity laughed aloud. "Oh, Jim, Jim, what a darling old numskull you are!"

"In general, yes; but why just now?"

"Your wife will never make friends with me."

"Of course she will. She's lonely enough to take up with anybody."

"Thanks!"

"Well, will you call?"

"Have you told her you were going to ask me to?"

"Not yet."

"Then I'll call, on one condition."

"What's that, Charity Coe?"

"That you don't tell her. You'd better not, or she'll have my eyes and your scalp."

"But you'll call, won't you?"

"Of course. Anything you say—always."

"You're the damnedest decentest woman in the world, Charity Coe; and if—"

He paused. It is just as well not to go iffing about such matters.

Charity stopped short in her laughter. She and Jim stared at each other again across that abyss. It was terribly deep, but only a step over.

They heard the door-bell faintly, and a sense of guilt confused them again. Jim rose and wished himself out of it.

"It's only Prissy Atterbury," said Charity.

Prissy came in tugging at the ferocious mustaches that

only emphasized his lady-like carriage. He paused on the door-sill to stare and gasp, "My Gawd, at it again!"

They did not know what he meant, and he would not explain that he had seen them together ages ago and spread the gossip that they were in intrigue. The coincidence of his recurrence on their scene was not strange, for Charity had been using him as a kind of messenger-boy.

Prissy was that sort. He looked the gentleman and was, a somewhat too gentle gentleman, but very useful to ladies who needed an uncompromising escort and were no longer young enough to permit of chaperonage. He was considered perfectly harmless, but he was a fiend of gossip, and he rejoiced in the recrudescence of the Jim and Charity affair.

Jim confirmed Prissy's eager suspicions by taking himself off with a maximum of embarrassment. Charity went to the door with him—to kiss him good-by, as Prissy gloatingly supposed, but actually to say:

"I'll call on your wife to-morrow."

"You're an angel," said Jim, and meant it.

He thought all the way home what an angel she was, and Charity was thinking at the same time what a fool she had been to let Peter Cheever dazzle her to the fact that Jim Dyckman was the one man in the world that she belonged to. She needed just him and he just her.

CHAPTER XII

SOMETIMES Jim Dyckman was foolish enough to wish that he had been his wife's first lover. But a man has to get up pretty early to be that to any woman. The minxes begin to flirt with the milk-bottle, then with the doctor, and then to cherish a precocious passion for the first rag sailor-doll.

Jim had come as near as any man may to being a woman's first love in the case of Charity, and what good had it done him? He was the first boy Charity had ever played with. Her nurse had bragged about her to his nurse when Charity was just beginning to take notice of other than alimentary things. By that time Jim was a *blasé roué* of five and his main interest in Charity was a desire to poke his finger into the soft spot in her head.

The nurses restrained him in time, and his proud, young, lithe mother of then, when she heard of it, decided that he was destined to be a great explorer. His young father sniffed that he was more likely to be a gynecologist. They had a grand quarrel over their son's future. He became none of the things they feared or hoped that he would and he carried out none of his own early ambitions.

His first impressions of Charity had ranged from contempt, through curiosity, to protectiveness and affection. She got his heart first by being helpless. He began by picking up the things she let fall from her carriage or threw overboard and immediately cried for again. She had been human enough to do a good deal of that. When things cumbered her crib or her perambulator she brushed them into space and then repented after them.

Following her marriage to Peter Cheever she did just that with Jim Dyckman. His love cluttered up her domestic serenity and she chucked it overboard. And then she wanted it again. Then her husband chucked her overboard and she felt that it would not be so lonesome out there since Jim would be out there, too. But she found that he had picked himself up and toddled away with Kedzie. And now he could not pick Charity up any more. His wife wouldn't let him.

Jim did not know that he wanted to pick Charity up again till he called on her to ask her to call on his wife and pick Kedzie up out of her loneliness. It was a terrific thought to the simple-minded Jim when it came over him that the Charity Coe he had adored and given up as beyond his reach on her high pedestal was now lying at the foot of it with no worshiper at all.

Jim was the very reverse of a snob. Kedzie had won his devotion by seeming to need it. She had lost it by showing that she cared less for him than for the things she thought he could get for her. And now Charity needed his love.

There were two potent principles in Jim's nature, as in many another man's and woman's; one was an instant eagerness to help anybody in trouble; another was an instant resentment of any coercion. Jim could endure neither bossing nor being bossed; restraint of any sort irked him. There may have been Irish blood in him, but at any rate the saying was as true of him as of the typical Irishman—"You can lead him to hell easier than you can drive him an inch."

When Jim left Charity's house his heart ached to think of her distressful with loneliness. When he realized that somehow Kedzie was automatically preventing him from helping Charity his marital bonds began to chafe. He began to understand that matrimony was hampering his freedom. He had something to resent on his own behalf.

He had been so troubled with the thought of his short-

comings in devotion to Kedzie that he had not pondered how much he had surrendered. He had repented his inability to give Kedzie his entire and fanatic love. He saw that he had at least given his precious liberty of soul into her little hands.

Galled as he was at this comprehension, he began to think over the lessons of his honeymoon and to see that Kedzie had not given him entirety of devotion any more than he her. Little selfishnesses, exactions, tyrannies, petulances, began to recur to him.

He was in the dangerous frame of mind of a bridegroom thinking things over. At that time it behooves the bride to exert her fascinations and prove her devotion as never before.

Kedzie, knowing nothing of Jim's call on Charity or of his new mood, chanced to be in a most unfortunate humor. She criticized Jim; she declined to be amused or entertained; rebuffed his advances, ridiculed his pretensions of love. She even chose to denounce his mother for her heartlessness, his sister for her neglect, his father for his snobbery. That is always bad business. It puts a husband at bay with his back against the foundation walls of loyalty. They quarreled wonderfully and slept *dos-à-dos*. They did not speak the next morning.

The next afternoon Jim saw to his dismay that Kedzie was putting on her hat and gloves to go out on a shopping-cruise. If she went she would miss Charity's call.

He knew that he ought not to tell her of Charity's visit in advance. In fact, Charity had pledged him to a benevolent conspiracy in the matter. He put up a flag of truce and resumed diplomatic relations.

With the diplomatic cunning of a hippopotamus he tried to decoy Kedzie into staying at home awhile. His ponderous subtlety aroused Kedzie's suspicions, and at length he confirmed them by desperately confessing:

"Mrs. Cheever is going to call."

Kedzie's first thought was of Peter Cheever's new wife,

who had been taken up by a certain set of those whom one may call loose-principled or divinely tolerant, as one's own prejudices direct. Kedzie could not yet afford to be so forgiving. She flared up.

"Mrs. Cheever! That Zada thing going to call on me? How dare she!"

"Of course not."

"Oh, the other one, then?"

"Yes."

"The abandoned one?"

"That's pretty rough. She's been very kind to you and she wants to be again."

"Where did you learn so much?"

"We were talking about you."

"Oh, you were, were you? That's nice! And where was all this?"

He indulged in a concessive lie for the sake of the peace. "I met her in the street and walked along with her."

"Fine! And how did my name come to come up?"

"It naturally would. I was saying that I wished she'd —er—I wished that you and she might be friends."

"So that you and she could see each other still oftener, I suppose."

"It's rotten of you to say that."

"And it's rottener of you to go talking to another woman about your wife."

"But it was in the friendliest spirit, and she took it so."

"I see! Her first name is Charity and I'm to be one of her patients. Well, you can receive her yourself. I don't want any of her old alms! I won't be here!"

"Oh yes, you will!"

"Oh no, I won't!"

"You can't be as ill-mannered as that!"

"You talk to me of manners! Why, I've seen manners in your gang that would disgrace a brakeman and a lunch-counter girl on one of dad's railroads." Her father already

had railroads! So many people had them in the crowd she met that Kedzie was not strong enough to deny her father one or two.

Kedzie had taken the most violent dislike to Charity for a dozen reasons, all of them perfectly human and natural, and nasty and unjustifiable, and therefore ineradicable. The first one was that odious matter of obligation. Gratitude has been wisely diagnosticated as a lively sense of benefits to come. The deadly sense of benefits gone by is known as ingratitude.

No one knows just what the divinely unpardonable sin is, but the humanly or at least womanly unpardonable sin is to have known one's husband well before the wife met him, and then to try to be nice to the wife. To have known the wife in her humble days and to have done her a favor makes the sin unmentionable as well as unpardonable.

Jim Dyckman had involved himself in Charity's crime by trying to get Charity to help his wife again. It was bad enough that Charity had got Kedzie a job in the past and had sent Jim Dyckman to make sure that she got it. But for Jim, after Kedzie and he had been married and all, to ask Charity to rescue Kedzie from her social failure was monstrous.

The fact that Jim had felt sorry for his lonely Kedzie marooned on an iceberg in mid-society was humiliating enough; but for Charity to dare to feel sorry for Kedzie, too, and to come sailing after her—Kedzie shuddered when she thought of it.

She fought with her husband until it was too late for her to get away. Charity's card came in while they were still wrangling. Kedzie announced that she was not at home. Jim told the servant, "Wait!" and gave Kedzie a look that she rather enjoyed. It was what they call a caveman look. She felt that he already had his hands in her hair and was dragging her across the floor bumpitty-bump. It made her scalp creep deliciously. She was rather

tempted to goad him on to action. It would have a movie thrill.

But the look faded from Jim's eye and the blaze of wrath dulled to a gray contempt. She was afraid that he might call her what she had once overheard Pet Bettany call her—"A common little mucker." That sort of contempt seared like a splash of vitriol.

Kedzie, like Zada, was a self-made lady and she wanted to conceal the authorship from the great-grandmother-built ladies she encountered.

She pouted a moment, then she said to the servant, "We'll see her." She turned to Jim. "Come along. I'll go and pet your old cat and get her off my chest."

CHAPTER XIII

JIM thudded dismally along in her wake. Charity was in the drawing-room wearing her politest face. She could tell from Kedzie's very pose that she was as welcome as a submarine.

Kedzie said, "Awfully decent of you to come," and gave her a handful of cold, limp fingers.

Charity politely pretended that she had called unexpectedly and that she was in dire need of Kedzie's aid. She made herself unwittingly ridiculous in the eyes of Kedzie, who knew and despised her motive, not appreciating at all the consideration Charity was trying to show.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Mrs. Dyckman," Charity began, "but I've got to throw myself on your mercy. A few of us are getting up a new stunt for the settlement-work fund. It is to be rather elaborate and ought to make a lot of money. It is to represent a day in the life of a New York Bud. You can have your choice of several rôles, and I hope you will lend us a hand."

Kedzie had heard of this project and she had gnawed her bitter heart in a chagrin of yearning to take part in it. She had not been invited, and she had blenched every time she thought of it. She was so much relieved at being asked that she almost forgave Charity for her benevolence. She stammered: "It's awfully decent of you to ask me. I'll do my bit with the greatest of pleasure."

She rather regretted those last five words. They were a bit *Nimrimmy*.

Charity sketched the program for her.

"The Bud is discovered in bed. A street piano wakes

her. There is to be a dance to a hurdy-gurdy. Then the Bud has breakfast. It is served by a dancing maid and butler. Tom Duane is to be the butler. You could be—no, you wouldn't fancy the maid, I imagine."

Kedzie did not fancy the maid.

Charity went on: "The girl dresses and goes to a rehearsal of the Junior League. That's to be a ballet of harlequins and columbines. She goes from there to her dressmaker's. I am to play the dressmaker. I have my *mannequins*, and you might want to play one of those and wear the latest thing—or you could be one of the customers. You can think it over.

"Then the girl is seen reading a magazine and there is a dance of cover girls. If you have any favorite illustrator you could be one of his types.

"Next the Bud goes to an art exhibition. This year Zuloaga is the craze, and several of his canvases will come to life. Do you care for Zuloaga?"

"Immensely, but—" Kedzie said, wondering just what Zuloaga did to his canvases. She had seen a cubist exhibition that gave her a headache, and she thought it might have something to do with Zulus.

Charity ran on: "After dinner the Bud goes to the theater and sees a pantomime and a series of ballets, dolls of the nations—Chinese, Polish, also nursery characters. You could select something in one of those dances, perhaps.

"And last of all there is a chimney-sweeps' dance as the worn-out Bud crawls into bed. If none of these suit you we'd be glad to have any suggestion that occurs to you. Of course, a girl of to-day does a thousand more things than I've mentioned. But the main thing is, we want you to help us out.

"You are—if you'll forgive me for slapping you in the face with a bouquet—you are exquisitely beautiful and I know that you dance exquisitely."

"How do you know that?" Kedzie asked, rashly.

"I saw you once as a—" Charity paused, seeing the red run across Kedzie's face. She had stumbled into Kedzie's past again, and Kedzie's resentment braced her hurt pride.

Charity tried to mend matters by a little advice: "You mustn't blush, my dear Mrs. Dyckman. If I were in your place I'd go around bragging about it. To have been a Greek dancer, what a beautiful past!"

"Thanks!" said Kedzie, curtly, with basilisk eyes. "I think I'd rather not dance any more. I'm an old married woman now. If you don't mind, I'll be one of the customers at your shop. I'll come in in the rippingest gown Jim can buy. I'll feel more comfortable, too, under your protection, Mrs. Cheever."

Jim laughed and Kedzie grinned. But she was canny. She was thinking that she would be safest among that pack of wolves if she relied on her money to buy something dazzling rather than on the beauty that Charity alleged. She did not want to dance before those people again. She would never forget how her foot had slipped at Newport.

Thirdly, she felt that she would be sheltered a little from persecution beneath the wing of Charity. It rather pleased her to treat Charity as a motherly sort of person. It is the most deliciously malicious compliment a woman can pay another.

Charity did not fail to receive the stab. But it amused her so far as she was concerned. She felt that Kedzie was like one of those incorrigible *gamines* who throw things at kindly visitors to the slums. She felt sorry for Jim, and wondered again by what strange devices he had been led to marry so incompatible a girl as Kedzie.

Jim wondered, too. He sat and watched the two women, wondering as men do when they see women painfully courteous to each other; wondering as women must when they see men polite to their enemies.

Charity and Kedzie prattled on in a kind of two-story

conversation, and Jim studied them with shameless objectivity. He hardly heard what they said. He watched the pantomime of their so different souls and bodies. Charity, lean and smart and aristocratic, beautiful in a peculiar mixture of sophistication and tenderness; Kedzie, small and nymph-like and plebeian, beautiful in a mixture of innocence and hardness of heart.

Charity's body was like the work of a dashing painter—long lines drawn with brave force and direction. Kedzie's body was a thing of dainty curves and timidities. Charity was fashionable and wise, but her wisdom had lifted her above pettiness. Kedzie was of the village, for all her Parisian garb, and she had cunning, which is the lowest form of wisdom.

When at length Charity left, Jim and Kedzie sat brooding. Kedzie wanted to say something nice about Charity and was afraid to. The poor child always distrusted her generous impulses. She thought it cleverer to withhold trust from everybody, lest she misplace it in somebody. At length an imp of perversity taught her how to get rid of the credit she owed to Charity. She spoke after a long silence.

"Mrs. Cheever must be horribly fond of you."

"Why do you say that?" said Jim, startled.

"Because she's so nice to me."

Jim groaned with disgust. Kedzie giggled, accepting the groan as confession of a palpable hit. She sat musing on various costumes she might wear. She had a woman's memory for things she had caught a glimpse of in a shop-window or in a fashion magazine; she had a woman's imagination for dressing herself up mentally.

As a trained mathematician can do amazing sums in his head, so Kedzie could juggle modes and combinations, colors and stuffs, and wrap them about herself. While Kedzie composed her new gown, her husband studied her, still wondering at her and his inability to get past the barriers of her flesh to her soul. Charity's flesh seemed

but the expression of herself. It was cordial and benevolent, warm and expressive in his eyes. Her hands were for handclasp, her lips for good words, her eyes for honest language. He had not embraced her except in dances years before, and in that one quickly broken embrace at Newport. He had not kissed her since they had been boy and girl lovers, but the savor of her lips was still sweet in his memory. He felt that he knew her soul utterly.

He had possessed all the advantages of Kedzie without seeming to get acquainted with the ultimate interior Kedzie at all. She was to him well-known flesh inhabited by a total stranger, who fled from him mysteriously. When she embraced him she held him aloof. When she kissed him her lips pressed him back. He could not outgrow the feeling that their life together was rather a reckless flirtation than a communion of merged souls.

He stared at her now and saw dark eyebrows and eyelashes etched on a white skin, starred with irises of strange hue, a nose deftly shaped, a mouth as pretty and as impersonal as a flower, a throat of some ineffably exquisite petal material. She sat with one knee lifted a little and clasped in her hands, and there was something miraculous about the felicity of the lines, the arms penciled downward from the shoulders and meeting in the delicately contoured buckle of her ten fingers, the thigh springing in a suave arc from the confluent planes of her torse, the straight shin to the curve of instep and toe and heel. Her hair was an altogether incredible extravagance of manufacture.

George Meredith has described a woman's hair once for all, and if Jim had ever read anything so important as *The Egoist* he would have said that Kedzie's poll was illustrated in that wonderfully coiffed hair-like sentence picturing Clara Middleton and "the softly dusky nape of her neck, where this way and that the little lighter-colored irreclaimable curls running truant from the comb and the knot—curls, half-curls, root-curls, vine-ringlets,

wedding-rings, fledgling feathers, tufts of down, blown wisps—waved or fell, waved over or up to involutedly, or strayed, loose and downward, in the form of small silken paws, hardly any of them much thicker than a crayon shading, cunninger than long, round locks of gold to trick the heart."

Kedzie's hair was as fascinating as tnat, and she had many graces and charms. For a while they had proved fascinating, but a man does not want to have a cartoon, however complexly beautiful, for a wife. Jim wanted a congenial companion—that is to say, he wanted Charity Coe.

But he could not have her. If he had been one of the patriarchs or a virtuous man of Mohammedan stock he could have tried, by marrying a female quartet, to make up one good, all-round wife. But he was doomed to a single try, and he had picked the wrong one.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT is a man to do who realizes that he has married the wrong woman?

The agonies of the woman who has been married to the wrong man have been celebrated innumerably and vats of tears spilled over them. She used to be consigned to a husband by parental choice and compulsion. Those days are part of the good old times.

For a man there never has been any sympathy, since he has not usually been the victim of parental despotism in the matter of selecting a spouse, or, when he has been, he has had certain privileges of excursion. The excursion is still a popular form of mitigating the severities of an unsuccessful marriage. Some commit murder, some commit suicide, some commit other things. Marriage is the one field in which instinct is least trustworthy and it is the one field in which it is accounted immoral to repent errors of judgments or to correct them.

The law has found it well to concede a good deal to the criminals. After centuries of vain cruelty it was found that certain people simply could not be made good by any rigor of confinement or any heaping up of punishment. So the law has come down to the criminal with results no worse at the worst than before, and sublimely better at the best than before. The civil law is doing the same slowly for the mal-married.

But Jim Dyckman was not even dreaming of seeking a rescue from his mistake by way of a divorce.

Charity had entered the divorce court and she would always bear the reproach of some of her most valued

friends. She could not imaginably encourage Jim Dyckman to free himself by the same channel, and if he did, how could Charity marry him? The marriage of two divorced persons would provoke a tempest of horror from part of the world, and gales of ridicule from the rest. Besides, there was no sign that Kedzie would ever give Jim cause for divorce, or that he would make use of it if she gave it him.

Charity could not help pondering the situation, for she saw that Jim was hopelessly mismated. Jim could not help pondering the situation, for he saw the same thing. But he made no plans for release. Kedzie had given no hint of an inclination to misconduct. She was certainly not going to follow Gilfoyle into the beyond. Jim was left helpless with an unanswerable riddle on his mind.

He could only curse himself for being fool enough to get married, and join the vast club of the Repenters at Leisure. He felt sorrier for Kedzie than ever, but he also felt sorry for himself.

The better he came to know his wife the more he came to know how alien she was to him in how many ways. The things she wanted to be or seem were utterly foreign to his own ideals, and if people's ambitions war what hope have they of sympathy?

Jim could not help noticing how Kedzie was progressing in her snobology. She had had many languages to learn in her brief day. She had had to change from Missouri to flat New York, then upward through various strata of diction. She had learned to speak with a certain elegance as a movie princess. But she had learned that people of social position do not talk on stilts outside of fiction. She had since been trying to acquire the rough slang of her set. It was not easy to be glib in it. She had attained only a careful carelessness as yet. But she was learning! As soon as she had attained a careless carelessness she would be qualified.

But there was another difficulty. She had not yet been

able to make up her mind as to what character she should play in her new world. That had to be settled before she could make her final choice of dialect, for dialect is character, and she had found, to her surprise, that the upper world contained as great a variety of characters as any other level.

There were tomboys and hoydens and solemn students; hard-working sculptresses and dreamy poetesses; girls who wanted to be boys, and girls who wanted to be nuns; girls who were frantic to vote, and girls who loathed the thought of independence; girls who ached to shock people, and girls of the prunes-and-prismatic type, patricians and precisians, anarchists and Bohemians.

She encountered girls who talked appallingly about breeding dogs and babies, about Freudian erotics, and new schools of art, Futurism, Vorticism. Their main interest was Ismism. There were others whose intellectuality ran to new card-mathematics in pirate bridge, gambling algebra.

Kedzie was in a chaos of sincere convictions and even more sincere affectations. She could not select an attitude for herself. She could not recapture her own soul or decide what she wanted to be.

Her life was busy. She had to learn French and numberless intricacies of fashionable ethics. She had already learned to ride a horse for her moving-picture work, but Jim warned her that she must learn to jump so that she could follow the hounds with him. She watched pupils in hurdling and dreaded to add that to her accomplishments. It made her seasick to witness the race to the barrier, the gathering of the horse, the launch into space, the clatter of the top bar as it came off sometimes, the grunting thud of the big brute as he returned to earth and galloped away, not always with the rider still aboard. She imagined herself skirled along the tanbark and was afraid.

She had to summon all the courage of her movie days

before she could intrust herself to a riding-master. Soon she grew to like the excitement; she learned to charge a fence, hand the horse his head at the right moment, and take him up at the exact second. And by and by she was laughing at other beginners and talking horsy talk with such assurance that she rather gave the impression of tracing straight back to the Centaur family.

Likewise now she watched other new-comers and rank outsiders break into the sacred inclosure. She mocked them and derided them. She regretted aloud the unfortunate marriages of well-born fellows with actresses and commoners from beyond the pale. Among the first French words she learned to use was *mésalliance*.

She began to wonder if she had not made one herself. She found inside the paddock so many men more brilliant than her husband. There were as many types of man as of woman—the earnest, the ascetic, the socialistic, the pious youth, wastrels, rakes, fops. There were richer men than Jim and men of still older family, men of even greater wealth.

She had been married only a few weeks and she was already speculating in comparisons! It was a more or less inescapable result of a marriage for ambition, since each ambition achieved opens a horizon of further ambitions.

She had a brief spell of delight in the rehearsals of the "Day of the Bud." She met new people informally and they were all so shy and self-conscious that they were not inclined to resent Kedzie's intrusion. Kedzie would once have ridiculed them as "amachoors"; now she wished that she, too, were only an "amaturr" instead of a reformed professional.

If some of the ladies snubbed her she found others that cultivated her; a few of the humbler women even toadied to her position; a few of the men snuggled up to her picturesque beauty. She snubbed them with vigor. She

hated them and felt smirched by their challenges. That was splendid of her.

She was beginning to find herself and her party, but outside the circle of Jim's immediate entourage. And Jim was beginning to find himself a new ambition and a new circle of friends.

CHAPTER XV

JIM was becoming quite the military man. His new passion took him away from womankind, saved him from temptation, and freed his thoughts from the obsession of either Kedzie or Charity. The whole nation was turning again toward soldiering, drifting slowly and resistingly, but helplessly, into the very things it had long denounced as Prussianism and conscription. A universal mobilization was brewing that should one day compel all men and all women, even little boys and girls and the very old, to become part of a giant machinery for warfare.

England, too, had railed at conscription, and when the war smote her had seen her little army of a quarter of a million almost annihilated under the first avalanche of the German descent toward Paris. England had gathered volunteers and trained them behind the bulwark of her navy and the red wall of the bleeding French nation. And England had given up volunteering and gone into the business of making everybody, without distinction of sex, age, or degree, contribute life and liberty and luxury to the common cause.

Behind the bulwark of the British fleet and the Allied armies the United States had debated, not for weeks or months, but for years with academic sloth the enlargement of its tiny army. It had accomplished only the debate, a ludicrous haggle between those who turned their backs on the world war and said that war was impossible and those who declared that it was inevitable.

Some Americans asserted that it was none of America's business what happened in Europe or how many American

citizens died on the free seas, and that the one way to bring war into our country was to be prepared for it. Other Americans grew angry enough to forswear their allegiance to a nation of poltroons and dotards; they went to France or Canada to fight or fly for the Allies. Many of them died. Yet others tried to equip themselves at home somewhat to meet the red flood when it should break the dam and sweep across the American borders.

Of these last was Jim Dyckman. Since he had joined the National Guard he gave it more and more of his enthusiasm. Unhappily married men have always fled to the barracks or the deck as ill-mated women fled to convents.

Night after night Jim spent at the armory, drilling with his company, conferring at headquarters, laboring for recruits, toiling over the paper work.

Kedzie pouted awhile at his patriotism, ridiculed it and hated it, and then accepted it as a matter of course. She could either stay at home and read herself to sleep or join the crowds. The rehearsals of the "Day of the Bud" gave her some business, and she picked up a few new friends. She made her appearance with the company in a three-nights' performance that netted several thousands of dollars. Jim saw her once. She was gorgeous, a little too gorgeous. She did not belong. She felt it herself, and overworked her carelessness. Her non-success hurt her bitterly. People did not say of her, as in the movies, "How sweet!" but, "Rather common!"

And now Kedzie was bewildered and lost. She found no comfort in Jim. She had to seek companionship somewhere. At first she made her engagements only on Jim's drill nights. Soon she made them on nights when he was free.

When they met, each found the other's experiences of no importance. Her indifference to the portentous meanings and campaigns of the European war dazed him. He wondered how any human being could live in such

epochal weeks and take no thought of events. She was not interested even in the accounts of the marvelous sufferings of women and their marvelous achievements in the munition-plants, the fields, and hospitals. He watched Kedzie skip the head-lines detailing some sublime feat of endeavor like the defense of Verdun and turn to the page where her name was included or not among the guests at a dinner well advertised by the hostess. She would skip the pages of photographs showing forth the daily epics of Europe and ponder the illustrations of some new smock. He shook his head over her as if she were a doll come to life and nothing stirring within but a music-box and a sawdust heart. He was disappointed in her—abysmally. He devoted himself to his military work as if he were a bachelor.

For the third year now the Americans were still discussing just what sort of army it should have, and meanwhile getting none at all.

The opponents of preparedness grew so ferocious in their attacks on the pleaders for troops that the word "pacifist" became ironical. They seemed to think it a crime to assault anybody but a fellow-countryman.

All the while the various factions of unhappy Mexico, fought together and threatened the peace of the United States. The Government that had helped drag President Huerta from his chair with the help of Villa and Carranza found itself in turn at odds with both its allies and its allies at war with each other.

There were scenes of rapine and flights of refugees that brought a little of Belgium to our frontier. And then the sombreros came over the border at Columbus, New Mexico, one night with massacre and escape, and the tiny American army under Pershing went over the border to get its erstwhile ally, Villa, dead or alive, and got him neither way.

And still Congress pondered the question of the army as if it were something as remote and patient as a problem

in sidereal arithmetic. Some asked for volunteers and some for universal service and some for neither. The National Guard was a bone of contention, and when the hour struck it was the only bone there was.

In June Jim Dyckman went to the officers' school of application at Peekskill for a week to get a smattering of tuition under Regular Army instructors. He slept on a cot in a tent and studied map-making and military book-keeping and mimic warfare, and was tremendously happy.

Kedzie made a bad week of it. She missed him sadly. There was no one to quarrel with or make up with. When he came back late Saturday night she was so glad to see him that she cried blissfully upon his proud bosom.

They had a little imitation honeymoon and went a-motoring on Sunday out into the lands where June was embroidering the grass with flowers and shaking the petals off the branches where young fruit was fashioning.

They discussed their summer schemes and she dreaded the knowledge that in July he must go to the manœuvers for three weeks. They agreed to get aboard his yacht for a little cruise before that dreadful interlude.

And then, early the next morning, the morning of the 19th of June, the knuckles of his valet on the door woke Jim from his slumber and a voice through the panels murmured:

"Very sorry, sir, but you are wanted on the telephone, sir—it's your regiment."

That was the way the Paul Reveres of 1916 summoned the troops to arms.

Mr. Minute-Man Dyckman sat on the edge of his bed in his silk pajamas with the telephone-receiver at his ear, and yawned: "H'lo. . . . Who is it? . . . What is it? . . . Oh, it's you, sergeant. . . . Yes? . . . No! . . . For God's sake! . . . I'll get out right away."

"What's the matter? Is the house on fire?" Kedzie gasped from her pillow, half-awake and only half-afraid, so prettily befuddled she was with sleep. She would have

made a picture if Jim had had eyes to see her as she struggled to one elbow and thrust with her other hand her curls back into her nightcap, all askew. Her gown was sliding over one shoulder down to her elbow and up to one out-thrust knee.

Jim put away the telephone and pondered a moment.

Kedzie caught at his arm. "What's the matter? Why don't you tell me!"

He spoke with a boyish pride of war and a husbandly solemnity: "The President has called out the National Guard. We're to mobilize to-day and get to the border as soon as we can. They hope that our regiment will be the first to move."

CHAPTER XVI

KEDZIE'S answer was a fierce seizure of him in her arms. She was palsied with fright for him. She had seen more pictures of dead soldiers than he knew, and now she saw her man shattered and tortured with wounds and thirst. She felt in one swift shock what the wives of Europe had felt by the million. She clung to Jim and sobbed:

"You sha'n't go! I won't let them take you! You belong to me!"

He gathered her awkwardly into his arms and they were more nearly married then than they had ever been or should ever be again.

The pity of it! that only their separation could bring them together! Fate is the original Irish-bullster.

Jim tried hurriedly to console Kedzie. He found her hard to make brave. The early-morningness of the shock, the panic of scattered sleep, gave her added terror. He had to be cruel at last. Without intention of humor he said:

"Really, honey, you know you just can't keep the President waiting."

He tore loose the tendrils of her fingers and ran to his own dressing-room. She wept awhile, then rose to help accoutre him. He had his uniform at home still.

In the Grecian simplicity of her nightgown, the very cream of silk, she might have been Andromache harnessing Hector. Only there was no baby for him to leave with her, no baby to shrink in fright from the horsehair crest of the helmet that he did not wear.

When he was all dressed in his olive-drab she still could not let him go. She held him with her soft arms and twiddled the gun-metal buttons of his blouse. And when at length she must make an end of farewells she hugged him with all her might and was glad that the hard buttons hurt the delicate breast that he felt against him smotheringly sweet and perilously yielding.

Not knowing how tame the event of all this war-like circumstance was to prove, he suffered to the deeps of his being the keen ache of separation that has wrung so many hearts in this eternally battling world. War, the sunderer, had reached them with his great divorce.

When he was free of her at last she followed him and caught new kisses. She ran shamelessly barefoot to the door to have the last of his lips, called good-by to him when the elevator carried him into the pit, and flung kisses downward after him. Then she stumbled back to her room and cried aloud. Liliane, her maid, came to help her and Liliane wept with her, knowing all too well what war could do to love.

Later Kedzie went to the armory and slipped through the massed crowds to see Jim again. He was gloriously busy and it stirred her martially to see his men come up, click heels, salute, report, ask questions, salute, and retreat again.

A few excited days of recruiting and equipping and then the ceremony of the muster-in. Jim spent his nights at home, but his terrified mother and his none too stoical father were there to rival Kedzie in devotion.

Importance was in the air. There was a stir of history in the public mood. The flags rippled with a new twinkle of stars and a fiercer writhing of stripes. The red had the omen of blood.

On the third day there was a ruffle of drums and a crying of brass on Fifth Avenue. People recalled the great days when the boys in blue had paraded away to the wars. Only this regiment marched up, not down, the

Avenue. It was the Sixty-ninth, its flagstaff solid with the silver rings of battle. It was moving north to the mobilization-camp.

On the ninth day the Seventh went down the Avenue, twelve hundred strong, to entrain for Texas. The bullets of the foe were not the only dangers. It was midsummer and these men were bound for the tropics and the cursed fields of sand where the tarantula, the rattlesnake, and the scorpion lurked under the cactus.

Jim's mother thought less of the Mexicans than of the fact that there were no sleeping-cars even for the officers. They would get them on the way, but it would be a fearsome journey ever southward into the heat, six days in the troop-trains.

Kedzie was proud of her husband, quite conceited about him, glad that he was marching instead of standing on the curb. But her heart, doubled in bulk, pounded against her side like the leaden clapper of a broken bell.

Jim caught sight of her where she stood on the steps of his father's house, and her eyes, bright with tears, saddened him. The fond gaze of his mother touched another well-spring of emotion, and the big, proud stare of his father another.

But when by chance among the mosaic of faces he saw Charity Coe there was a sorrow in her look that made him stumble, and his heart lost step with the music. Somehow it seemed cruelest of all to leave her there.

CHAPTER XVII

THE town was monstrously lonely when Kedzie turned back to her widowhood. Jim's mother and father and sister were touched by her grief and begged her to make their home hers, but she shook her head.

For a while her grief and her pride sustained her. She was the Spartan wife of the brave soldier. She even took up knitting as an appropriate activity. She thought in socks.

But the hateful hours kept coming, the nights would not be brief, and the days would not curtail their length nor quicken their pace. The loathsome inevitable result arrived.

Even her grief began to bore her. Fidelity grew inane, and her young heart shrieked aloud for diversion.

If battles had happened down there, if something stirring had only appeared in the news, she could have taken some refreshment of excitement from the situation. Heroic demands breed heroes and heroines, but all that this crisis demanded was the fidelity of torpor, the loyalty of a mollusk.

Nothing happened except the stupid chronicles of heat and monotony. The rattlesnakes did not bite; the tarantulas scuttered away; the scorpions were no worse than wasps. The Mexicans did not attack or raid or attempt the assassinations which popular hostility accepted as their favorite outdoor sport. Mexico continued her siesta while the United States sentineled the bedroom.

Jim's letters told of scorching heat, of blinding dust-

storms, and cloudbursts that made lakes of the camps, but nothing else happened except the welter of routine.

The regiments had only police work to do, and the task grew irksome. Men began to think of their neglected businesses. The men who stayed at home were sharing bountifully in the prosperity of the times. The volunteers at the Border were wasting their abilities for fifteen dollars a month.

The officers began to resign by the score, by the hundred. As many enlisted men dropped out as could beg off. Jim could afford to stay; he would not resign, though Kedzie wrote appeals and finally demands that he return to his wretched wife.

Resentment replaced sorrow in her heart. She began to impute ugly motives to his absence. The tradition of the alluring Mexican señorita obsessed her. She imagined him engaged in wild romances with sullen beauties. She was worried about guitar music and stilettoes.

If there were beautiful señoritas there in McAllen, Jim did not see them. His dissipations were visits to the movie shows and excursions for dinner to Mr. and Mrs. Riley's hotel at Mission. Liquor was forbidden to officers and men under dire penalties, and Jim's conviviality was restricted to the soda-water fountains. He became as rabid a consumer of ice-cream cones and sundæs as a matinée girl. It was a burlesque of war to make the angels hold their sides, if the angels could forget the slaughter-house of Europe.

Jim felt that the Government had buncoed him into this comic-opera chorus. He resented the service as an incarceration. But he would not resign. For months he plodded the doleful round of his duties, ate bad food, poured out unbelievable quantities of sweat and easily believable quantities of profanity.

On the big practice hike through the wilderness who that saw him staggering along, choked with alkali dust, knouted by the sun, stabbed by the cactus, carrying two

rifles belonging to worn-out soldiers in addition to his own load, looking forward to the privilege of throwing himself down by the roadside for ten minutes' respite, praying for the arrival in camp with its paradise of a little shelter tent and beans and bacon for dinner or for breakfast or supper—who could have believed that he did not have to do it? That he had indeed at home soft luxuries, a rosy little wife, a yacht, and servants to lift his shoes from the floor for him?

It was easier, however, for him to get along thus there where everybody did the same than it was for Kedzie to get along ascetically in New York where nearly everybody she knew was gay.

She might have gone down to Texas to see Jim, but when he wrote her how meager the accommodations were and how harsh the comforts, she pained him by taking his advice. Like almost all the other wives, she stayed at home and made the best of it.

The best was increasingly bad. Her lot, indeed, was none too cheerful. After her clandestine marriage she had confronted her husband's parents, and the result was not satisfactory. She had had no honeymoon, and her husband's friends were chill toward her. Then he marched away and left her for half a year.

She was young and pretty and restless. She had acquired a greed of praise. She had given up her public glory to be her husband's private prima donna; and then her audience had abandoned her.

Though her soul traveled far in a short time by the calendar, every metamorphosis was slow and painful and imperceptible. She wept her eyes dry; then moped until her gloom grew intolerable. The first diversion she sought was really an effort of her grief to renew itself by a little repose. Her first amusement was for her grief's sake. But before long her diversions were undertaken for diversion's sake.

She had to have friends and she had to take what she could get. The more earnest elements of society did not interest her, nor she them. The fast crowd disgusted her at first, but remained the only one that did not repulse her advances.

Her first glimpses of the revelers filled her with repugnance and confirmed her in what she had heard and read of the wickedness of the rich. The fact that she had seen also the virtuous rich, solemn rich, religious rich, miserly rich, was forgotten. The fact that in every stage of means there are the same classes escaped her memory. She had known of middle classes where libertinism flourished, had known of licentiousness among the poor shopkeepers, shoddy intriguers in the humble boarding-houses.

But now she felt that money made vice and forgot that vice is one of the amusements accessible to the very poorest, to all who inherit flesh and its appetites.

Gradually she forgot her horror of dissipation. The outswirling eddy of the gayer crowd began to gather and compel her feet. She lacked the wisdom to attract the intellectuals, the culture to run with the artistic and musical sets, the lineage to satisfy that curious few who find a congeniality in the fact that their ancestors were respectable and recorded persons.

In the fast gang she did not need to have or use her brains. She did not need a genealogy. Her beauty was her admission-fee. Her restlessness was her qualification.

Those who were careless of their own behavior were careless of their accomplices. They accepted Kedzie without scruple. They accepted especially the invitations she could well afford. She ceased to be afraid of a compliment. She grew addicted to flattery. She learned to take a joke off-color and match it in shade.

She met women of malodorous reputation and found that they were not so black as they had been painted. She learned how warm-hearted and charitable a woman could be for whom the world had a cold shoulder and no charity.

She extended her tolerance from men whose escapades had been national topics to women who had been involved in distinguished scandals and were busily involving themselves anew. Being tolerant of them, she had to be tolerant of their ways. Forgiving the sinner helps to forgive the sin. There are few things more endearing than forgiveness. One of the most appealing figures in literature and art is the forgiven woman taken in adultery.

And thus by easy stages and generous concessions Kedzie, who had begun her second marriage with the strictest ideals of behavior, found herself surrounded by people of a loose-reined life. Things once abhorred became familiar, amusing, charming.

It was increasingly difficult to resent advances toward her own citadel which she had smiled at in others. She grew more and more gracious toward a narrowing group of men till the safety-in-numbers approached the peril-in-fewness. She grew more and more gracious to a widening group of women, and they brought along their men.

Kedzie even forgave Pet Bettany and struck up a friendship with her. Pet apologized to her other friends for taking up with Kedzie, by the sufficient plea, "She gives such good food and drink at her boarding-house."

Kedzie found Pet intensely comforting since Pet was full of gossip and satirized with contempt the people who had been treating Kedzie with contempt. It is mighty pleasant to hear of the foibles of our superiors. The illusion of rising is acquired by bringing things down to us as well as by rising to them. When Pet told Kedzie something belittling about somebody big Kedzie felt herself enlarged.

Pet had another influence on Kedzie. Pet was no more contemptuous of aristocrats than she was of people who were good or tried to be, or, failing that, kept up a decent pretense.

Pet made a snobbery of vice and had many an anecdote

of the lapses of the respectable and the circumspectable. Her railing way brought virtue itself into disrepute and Kedzie was frightened out of her last few senses. She fell under the tyranny of the *risqué*, which is as fell as the tyranny of the prudish.

Prissy Atterbury had told Pet without delay of meeting Jim Dyckman at Charity's home. Now that Pet was a crony of Kedzie's she recalled the story. Finding Kedzie one day suffering from an attack of scruples, and declining to accept an invitation because "Jim might not like it," Pet laughed:

"Oh, Jim! What right has he got to kick? He didn't lose much time getting back to his Charity Coe after he married you."

"His Charity Coe!" Kedzie gasped. "What do you mean by his Charity Coe?"

"Why, his old reliable sweetheart. He's been silly about her since babyhood. When she married Pete Cheever he moped like a sick hound. And didn't he beat up Pete in a club only a few days before he married you?"

This was all news to Kedzie and it sickened her. She demanded more poison, and Pet ladled it out joyously.

She told Kedzie how Prissy Atterbury found Jim at Charity's home. But Kedzie remembered vividly that Jim had said he met Charity on the street. And now she had caught him in a lie, a woman-lie! He was not there to explain that he visited Charity in Kedzie's behalf, and if he had explained it would only have embittered her the more.

Being quite convinced now of Jim's perfidy, she denied the possibility of it.

"Jim's square, I'm sure. There couldn't be anything wrong with him. And Mrs. Cheever is an awful prig, everybody says."

Pet whooped with laughter: "They're the worst sort. Why, only a couple of years ago Jim and Charity were up

in the Adirondacks alone together. Prissy Atterbury caught them sneaking back."

So one lie was used to bolster another. The firmest structures can be thus established by locking together things that will not stand alone—as soldiers stack arms. Pet went on stacking lies and Kedzie grew more and more distressed, then infuriated. Her bitterness against Charity grew the more acid. Charity's good repute became now the whitewash on a sepulcher of corruption. Her resentment of the woman's imagined hypocrisy and of her husband's apparent duplicity blazed into an eagerness for vengeance—the classic vengeance of punishing a crime by committing another of the sort. Like revenges like; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a loyalty for a loyalty.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUT now, as often happens in evil as in virtue, Kedzie had the willingness, but not the resolution. She threw her scruples into the waste-basket, accepted Pet's invitation, went with her and her crowd to one of the most reckless dances in Greenwich Village, where men and women strove to outdo the saturnalia of Montmartre, vied with one another in exposure, and costumed themselves as closely according to the fig-leaf era as the grinning policemen dared to permit.

Kedzie screamed with laughter at some of the ribaldry and danced in a jostle of fauns, satyrs, nymphs, and mænads. Yet when her partner clenched her too straitly she could not forget that she was the wife of an absent soldier. And when on the way home he tried to flirt she could not quell the nausea in her soul.

But practice makes perfect and Kedzie was learning to be downright bad, though yet awhile she gave but stingy reward to her assiduous cavaliers. She was what Pet called a *demi-veuve* and unprofitable to the men she used as weapons of her revenge against her innocent and unwitting husband.

There was another factor working toward her debasement and that was the emancipation of her pocket-book. It was a fairy's purse now and she could not scatter her money faster than she found it renewed. Her entertainments grew more lavish and more reckless. She had an inspiration at last. She would put Jim's yacht into commission and take a party of friends on a cruise, well chaperoned, of course.

She sent instructions to the master of the vessel to get steam up. Knudsen sent back word that he would have to have an order from the boss. She promised to have him discharged and in her anger fired a telegram off to Jim, demanding that he rebuke the surly skipper and order the boat out.

The telegram found Jim in a state of doldrums. The food had turned against him, homesickness was like a fever in him, and the monotony of his routine had begun to get his nerves. He was startled and enraged at Kedzie's request for permission to go yachting and he fired back a telegram:

Knudsen was right I am astonished at your suggestion do not approve in the slightest.

He regretted his anger when it was too late. Kedzie, who had already made up her list of guests and received their hilarious acceptances, was compelled to withdraw the invitations. She would have bought a yacht of her own, but she could not afford it! She was not allowed so large a fund. She, Mrs. Dyckman, wanted something and could not afford it! What was the use of anything, anyhow?

Times had changed for Kedzie indeed when the little beggar from the candy-store who had cried once when Skip Magruder, the bakery waiter, refused to take her to the movies twice in one Sunday, was crying now because her miser of a husband forbade her a turbine yacht as a plaything.

She was crushed with chagrin and she felt completely absolved of the last obligation. What kind of a brute had she married who would go away on a military picnic among his nice, warm cacti and deny his poor deserted wife a little boat-ride and a breath of fresh air?

If she had had any lingering inclination to visit Jim in Texas she gave it up now. She went to Newport in-

stead and took Pet Bettany along for a companion—at Kedzie's expense, of course.

Charity Coe Cheever was visiting Mrs. Noxon again and Kedzie snubbed her haughtily when she met her at the Casino or on Bailey's Beach. Kedzie was admitted to that sacred surf of the Spouting Rock Association now and she was as pretty a naiad as there was.

But now she encountered occasional rebuffs from certain people, not only because she was common, but because she was reputed to be fast. When the gossip-peddlers brought her this fierce verdict she was hardened enough to scorn the respectables as frumps. She grew a little more impudent than ever and her pout began to take the form of a sneer.

She lingered in and about Newport till the autumn came. Occasional excursions on other people's yachts or in her own cars or to house-parties broke the season, but she loved Newport. Jim's name had given her entry to places and sets whence nobody quite had the courage or the authority to dismiss her.

At Newport there was a very handsome fool named Jake Vanderveer, distantly related to the charming Vander Veers as well as the Van der Veers. He was even more distantly related to his own wife at the time Kedzie met him.

Pet Bettany had told Kedzie what a rotter Mrs. Jake was, and Kedzie felt awfully sorry for Jakie. So did Jakie. He was sophomoric enough to talk about his broken heart and she was sophomoric enough to suffer for him most enjoyably.

A little sympathy is a dangerous thing. Married people run a great risk unless they keep theirs strictly mutual and for home consumption.

Jakie said he believed in running away from his grief. Kedzie ran with him for company. People's tongues ran just as fast. Jakie was making a lot of money in Wall

Street and trying to drown his sorrows there. Kedzie was thrilled by his jargon of the market and he taught her how to read the confetti streamers that pour out of the ticker. Jakie confided to her a great scheme.

"The only way I can keep that wife of mine from spending all my money is to spend it first."

"You're a genius!" Kedzie said. A woman usually approves almost any scheme for keeping money away from another woman.

"I'm going to make a killing next week," said Jakie, "and I'm going just quietly to put a couple of thou. up for my little pal Kedzie. You can't lose. If you win you can buy yourself five thousand dollars' worth of popcorn."

Kedzie was enraptured. She would have some money at last that she didn't have to drag out of her husband. She prayed the Lord for a rising market.

Then Mrs. Dyckman sent for her. When Kedzie called the servants were extremely solemn. Kedzie had to wait till the doctor left. He was very solemn, too.

Kedzie found her mother-in-law in bed. She looked like a small mountain after a snow-storm. It was strange to Kedzie to find one so mighty brought low and speaking in so tiny a voice. Her husband was there and he was haggard with sympathy and alarm, a very elephant in terror. He was less courteous than usual to Kedzie and he left the room at his wife's signal. Mrs. Dyckman was more gentle than ever.

"Draw your chair up close, my child," she whispered. "I want to have a little talk with you and my voice is weak."

Kedzie was alarmed enough to revert to a simple phrase: "I'm awfully sorry you're sick. Are you very sick?"

"Very. There's such a lot of me, you know. It's disgusting. I've scared my poor husband to death. I'm glad Jim isn't here to be worried. I hope I'll not have to send for him. But I'd like to."

Kedzie felt a little quiver of alarm. She did not quite want Jim to come back just yet. She had grown used to his absence. His return would deprive poor Jakie of solace.

Mrs. Dyckman took Kedzie's hand and stared at her sadly.

"You're looking a little tired, my dear, if you'll forgive me for being frank. I'm very old and I very much want you and Jim to win out. Lying here I take things too anxiously, I suppose, but—I'm frightened. I don't want my boy and you to go the way so many other couples do. He's left you because his country needed him, or thought it did. It wouldn't look well to have him come back and find that in his absence you had forgotten him. Now, would it?"

"Why, Mrs. Dyckman!" Kedzie gasped, getting her hand away.

Mrs. Dyckman groped for it and took it back. "Don't be vexed. Or if you must be, pout as you used to. You mustn't grow hard, my child. Your type of beauty doesn't improve with cynicism. You must think sweet thoughts or simply be petulant when you're angry. Don't grow hard! If nothing else will move you let me appeal to your pride. You are traveling with a hard crowd, a cruel pack, Miss Bettany's pack, and a silly lot of men like Jake Vanderveer. And you mustn't, my child. You just mustn't get hard and brazen. Couldn't you give up Miss Bettany? She's an absolutely unprincipled creature. She's bad, and you must know it. Don't you?"

Kedzie could not answer, or would not. Mrs. Dyckman's voice grew poignant.

"I've lived so long and seen so much unhappiness. There is so much tragedy across the water. My poor daughter has had a cable that her husband's brother has been killed in France. Her husband has been wounded; she is sailing back. So many men, so many, many men are

dying. The machine-guns go like scythes all day long, and the poor fellows lie out there in the shrapnel rain—Oh, it is unbelievable. And Europe's women are undergoing such endless sorrow; every day over there the lists contain so many names. So many of Cicely's friends have perished. Life never was so full of sorrow, my dear, but it is such a noble sorrow that it seems as if nobody had any right to any other kind of sorrow.

"You are young, dear child. You are lonely and restless; but you don't realize how loathsome it is to other people to see such recklessness going on over here while such lofty souls are going to death in droves over there. The sorrow you will bring on yourself and all of us, and on poor Jim, will be such a hateful sorrow, my dear, such an unworthy grief!"

Kedzie choked, and mumbled, "I don't think I know what you mean."

Mrs. Dyckman petted her hand: "I don't think you do. I hope not. But take an old woman's word for it, be—be Cæsar's wife?"

"Cæsar's wife?" Kedzie puzzled. "What did she do?"

"It was what she didn't do. Well, I haven't the strength—or the right, perhaps—to tell you any more. Yes, I will. I must say this much. You are the subject of very widespread criticism, and Jim is being pitied."

"Me criticized? Jim pitied? Why? For what?"

"For the things you do, my dear, the places you go, and the hours you keep—and the friends you keep."

"That's disgusting!" Kedzie snarled. "The long-tongued gossips! They ought to be ashamed of themselves."

Mrs. Dyckman's fever began to mount. She dropped Kedzie's hand and tugged at the coverlet.

"You'd better go, my dear. I apologize. It's useless! When did age ever gain anything by warning youth? I'm an old fool, and you're a young one. And nothing

will stop your ambition to run through life to the end of it and get all you can out of it."

Kedzie felt dismissed and rose in bewildered anger. Mrs. Dyckman heaved herself to one elbow and pointed her finger at Kedzie.

"But keep away from Jake Vanderveer! and Pet Bettany! or—or— Send my nurse, please."

She fell back gasping and Kedzie flew, in a fear that the old lady would die of a stroke and Kedzie be blamed for it forever. Kedzie was so blue and terrified that she had to send for Jake Vanderveer to keep from going crazy. He told her that the market was still on the climb, and that her sympathy had saved his life. He had been desperate enough for suicide when he met her, and now he was one of the rising little suns of finance.

Mrs. Dyckman did not die, but she did not get well, and Jim's father wrote him that he'd better resign and come home. It would do his mother a world of good, and he was doing the country no good down there.

Jim was alarmed; he wrote out his resignation and submitted it to his colonel, who showed him a new order from the War Department announcing that no more resignations would be accepted except on the most urgent grounds. Idleness was destroying the Guard faster than a campaign. Jim returned to the doldrums with a new resentment. He was a prisoner now.

He had gone to Texas to find war and his wife to Newport to find gaiety. She found much more than that. On October 7th the old town was stirred by something genuinely new in sensations—the arrival of a German war submarine, the U-53.

THE FOURTH BOOK
THE MARCHIONESS HAS QUALMS

CHAPTER I

A FREIGHT submarine, the *Bremen*, had recently excited the wonderment of a world jaded with miracles by crossing from Helgoland to Norfolk with a cargo. But here was a war-ship that dived underneath the British blockade.

The dead of the *Lusitania* were still unrequited and unburied, but the Germans had graciously promised President Wilson to sink no more passenger-ships without warning, and they had been received back into the indulgence of the super-patient neutrals.

And now came the under-sea boat to test American hospitality. It was received with amazed politeness and the news flew through Newport, bringing the people flocking like children. An American submarine conducted its guest to anchorage. Mail for the ambassador was put ashore and courtesy visits were exchanged with the commandant of the Narragansett Bay Naval Station. In three hours the vessel, not to overstay the bounds of neutral hospitality, returned to the ocean.

A flotilla of American destroyers convoyed it outside and calmly watched while the monster halted nine ships off Nantucket, graciously permitted their crews and passengers to take themselves, but no belongings, into open boats; then torpedoed the vessels one after another.

The destroyers of the United States Navy stood by like spectators on the bleachers, and when the submarine had quite finished the supply of ships the obliging destroyers picked up the fragments in the open boats and brought

them ashore. And the U-53 went on unchecked, after one of the most astounding spectacles in the history of the sea.

Charity Coe and other women waited on the docks till midnight arranging refuge for more than two hundred victims. It was a novel method for getting into Newport mansions. Even Kedzie took in an elderly couple. She tried to get a few young men, but they were all taken.

The next morning there was a panic in Wall Street and nearly two million shares were flung overboard, with a loss of five hundred million dollars in market values. Marine insurance-rates rose from a hundred to five hundred per cent. and it seemed that our ocean trade would be driven from the free seas. But everything had been done according to the approved etiquette for U-boats, and there was not even an official protest.

Once more the Germans announced that they had wrecked the British naval supremacy, as in the battle of Jutland, after which glorious victory the German fleet appeared no more in the North Sea.

Nor was there any check in the throngs of merchant-vessels shuttling the ocean for the Allies. And that disgusted the Germans. Their promises to Mr. Wilson irked them. They lusted again for their old policy of "ruthlessness"; "*Schrecklichkeit*" joined "*Gott strafe*" in familiar speech, and Germany added America to her "Hymn of Hate." Strange, that among all the warring peoples the one nation that went to battle with the most fervent religious spirit, even putting "*Gott mit uns*" on the uniforms of its soldiers, that nation contributed to the slang of the day no nobler phrases than "*Schrecklichkeit*" and "*strafe*" and the equivalents of "scrap of paper" and "Hymn of Hate."

All this meant little to Kedzie except that Jakie Vanderveer, who had been her devoted squire for some time, was caught and ruined in the market slump. Otherwise he might have ruined Kedzie, for he had been dazzling her more and more with his lavish courtship. When he lost

his money he left Newport and Kedzie never knew how narrow an escape she had. She only knew that she did not make the money he promised to make for her. She said that war was terrible.

A pious soul would have credited Providence with the rescue. But Providence had other plans. One of the victims of the U-53 was a young English aviator, the Marquess of Strathdene. If the U-53 had not sunk the ship that carried him Kedzie would have had an exceedingly different future.

Strathdene had been a spendthrift, a libertine, and a loafer till the war shook England. He had been well shaken, too, and unsuspected emotions were aroused. He had learned to fly and insulted the law of gravity with the same impudence he had shown for the laws of morality.

In due time he was joined to an air squadron. He risked his life every moment he was aloft, but the danger became a negligible thing in the thrill of the liveliest form of big-game hunting thus far known to man. In mid-sky he stalked his prey and was stalked by it; he chased German *Taubes* or was chased by them into clouds and out of them, up hill and down dale in ether-land amid the showers from below of the raining aircraft guns. Strathdene knew how to dodge and duck, turn somersaults, volplane, spiral, coast downward on an invisible toboggan-slide, or climb into heaven on an airy stair.

The sky was full of such flocks; the gallant American gentlemen who made up the Escadrille Lafayette went clouding with him, and Mr. Robert Lorraine, the excellent actor, and Mr. Vernon Castle, the amiable revolutionist of the dance, and many and many another eagle heart. Strathdene scouted valuably during the first battle of the Somme, his companion working the gun or the camera or the bomb-dropping lever as the need might be.

And then one day a burst of shrapnel from the remote earth shattered his plane and him. A slug of iron went upward through his hip and another nicked off a bit

of his shoulder. But he brought his wounded machine safely to earth and toppled into the arms of the hospital aids; went backward in a motor-ambulance to a receiving-station, then back in a train, then across the Channel, then across the ocean in a steamer to be sunk by a submarine and brought ashore in a lifeboat. Strathdene had pretty well tested the modern systems of vehicular transportation.

The surgeons mended his wounds, but his nerves had felt the shrapnel. That was why the sea voyage had been advised. Strathdene seemed to have a magnetic gift for adventure. An aircraft gun brought him down from the clouds and a submersible ship came up from the deeps to have a try at him. Before long Kedzie would be saying that fate had taken all this trouble just to bring him and her together.

In the transfer from the ship to the lifeboat Strathdene's wounds were wrenched and his sufferings renewed. He was lucky enough to fall into the hands of Charity Coe Cheever. She was a war nurse of experience, and he was soon well enough to try to flirt with her. But she had been experienced also in the amorous symptoms of convalescent soldiers and she repressed his ardor skilfully. She put an ice-cap on his heart and head.

As soon as he was up and about again he met Kedzie. It seemed to be her business to take away from Charity Coe all of Charity's conquests, and the young Marquess found her hospitable to his hunger for friendship.

Before the first day's acquaintance was over Kedzie was as fascinated by his chatter as Desdemona was by Othello's anecdotes.

One night Kedzie dreamed that she was a Marquessess or whatever the wife of a Marquess would be styled.

Kedzie was herself again. Kedzie was dreaming again. She had an ambition for something higher than her station. She made haste to encourage the infatuated Marquess. Counting upon winning him somehow as her

husband, she gave him encouragement beyond any she had given her other swains.

But Strathdene had no intention of marrying her or any other woman. His heart was in the highlands, the cloudlands; his heart was not there.

A purer patriot or a warrior more free of any taint of caution than Strathdene could not be imagined, but otherwise he was as arrant a scamp as ever. While he waited for strength to "carry on" in the brave, new, English sense, it amused him to "carry on" in the mischievous old American sense.

Kedzie was determined that he should live long enough for her to free herself from Jim and make the marquisate hers. She seemed to be succeeding. She found Strathdene as easy of fascination as her old movie audiences had been. He even tried to write poetry about her pout; but he was a better rider on an aeroplane than on Pegasus.

Kedzie was soon wishing for Jim's return, since she could not see how to divorce him till he appeared. She tried to frame a letter asking for her release, but it was not easy writing. She felt that she would have a better chance of success if Jim were within wheedling distance. But Jim remained away, and Kedzie grew fonder and fonder of her Marquess, and he of her.

Perhaps they were really mated, their pettinesses and selfishnesses peculiarly complemental. In any case, they were mutually bewitched.

Their dalliance became the talk of Newport. Everybody believed that what was bad enough at best was even worse than it was. Charity Coe heard the couple discussed everywhere. She was distressed on Jim's account. And now she found herself in just the plight that had tortured Jim when he knew that Peter Cheever was disloyal to Charity and longed to tell her, but felt the duty too odious. So Charity pondered her own obligation. She was tempted to write Jim an anonymous letter, but had not the cowardice. She was tempted to write to him

frankly, but had not the courage. She did at last what Jim had done—nothing.

Jim's mother had heard of Vanderveer's disappearance from Kedzie's entourage and she had improved with hope. When she learned that Strathdene was apparently infatuated she grew worse and telegraphed Jim to ask for a leave of absence. She did not tell Kedzie of her telegram or of Jim's answer.

Pet Bettany flatly accused Kedzie of being guilty, and referred to the Marquess as her paramour. When Kedzie furiously resented her insolence Pet laughed.

"The more fool you, if you carry the scandal and lose the fun."

Kedzie was more afraid of Pet's contempt than of a better woman's. She began to think herself a big fool for not having been a bigger one. She fell into an altogether dangerous mood and she could no longer save herself. She almost prayed to be led into temptation. The unuttered prayer was speedily answered.

She went motoring with Strathdene late one night in a car he had hired. When he ventured to plead with her not to go back to her home where her servants provided a kind of chaperonage, she made only a formal protest or two. He stopped at a roadside inn, a secluded place well known for its unquestioning hospitality.

Strathdene, tremulous with victory, led Kedzie to the dining-room for a bit of sup and sip. The landlord escorted them to a nook in a corner and beckoned a waiter. Kedzie was studying the bill of fare with blurred and frightened vision when she heard the footsteps of the waiter plainly audible in the quiet room. They had a curious rhythm. There was a hitch in the step, a skip.

Her heart stopped as if it had run into a tree. The "skip" brought down on her soul a whole five-foot shelf of remembrances of her first New York love-affair with the lame waiter in the bakery. All her good fortune had been set in motion by poor, old, shabby "Skip." She had

soared away like some rainbow-hued bubble gently releasing itself from the clay pipe that inflated it out of the suds of its origin.

Kedzie had learned to be ashamed of Skip as long ago as when she was a Greek dancer. She had not seen or heard of him since she sent him the insulting answer to his stage-door note. And now he had saved himself up for a ruinous reappearance when she was in the company of a Marquess—and on such an errand!

What on earth was Skip doing so far from the Bronx and in the environs of Newport, of all places? It occurred to Kedzie that Skip might ask her the same question.

CHAPTER II

THE terror his footsteps inspired was confirmed by the unforgetable voice that came across her icy shoulder-blades. He slapped the china and silver down with the familiar bravura of a quick-lunch waiter, and her heart sank, remembering that she had once admired his skill.

The Marquess looked up at him with a glare of rebuke as Skip posed himself patiently with one hand, knuckles down, on the table, the other on his hip, and demanded, with misplaced enthusiasm:

"Well, folks, what's it goin' to be?"

The Marquess had been somewhat democratized by his life in the army, and, being a true Briton, he always expected the worst in America. He proceeded to order a light supper that would not take too long. Skip crushed him by saying:

"Ain't the little lady takin' nothin'?"

Kedzie was afraid to speak. She put her finger on the menu at a chafing-dish version of chicken, and the Marquess added it to his order. Skip shuffled away without recognizing Kedzie. She waited only for his exit to make her own.

It was terrifying enough to realize that the moment Skip caught a glimpse of her he would hail her noisily and tell the Marquess all about her. There still lingered in Kedzie a little more honesty than snobbery and she felt even less dread of being "bawled out" by a waiter in the presence of a Marquess than of having Skip Magruder know that she was in such a place even with a

Marquess. Skip had been good to her and had counseled her to go straight.

She felt no gratitude toward him now, but she could not face his contempt. That would be degradation beneath degradation. She was disgusted with everything and everybody, including herself. The glamour of the escapade was dissipated. The excitement of an illicit amour so delicious in so many farces, so tenderly dramatic in so many novels, had curdled. She saw what an ugly business she was in and she was revolted.

Kedzie waited only to hear the swinging door whiff after Skip's syncopated feet, then she whispered sharply across the table to the Marquess:

"Take me out of this awful place. I don't know what I'm doing here. I won't stay! not a moment!"

"But we've ordered—"

"You stay and eat, then. I won't stop here another minute!"

She rose. She smothered the Marquess's protests about the awkwardness, the ludicrousness of such a flight.

"What will the waiter think?" he asked, being afraid of a waiter, though of no one else.

Kedzie did not care what the waiter thought, so long as he did not know whom he thought it of. Strathdene gave the headwaiter a bill and followed Kedzie out. He was hungry, angry, and puzzled.

Skip Magruder never knew what a chaperon he had been. If Providence managed the affair it chose an odd instrument, and intervened, as usual, at the last moment. Providence would save itself a good deal of work if it came round a little earlier in these cases. Perhaps it does and finds nobody awake.

Strathdene demanded explanations. Kedzie told him truth but not all of it.

"It suddenly swept over me," she gasped, "how horrible it was for me to be there."

She wept with shame and when he would have consoled

her she kept him aloof. The astonishing result of the outing was that both came home better. It suddenly swept over Strathdene that Kedzie was innocenter than he had dreamed. She was good! By gad! she was good enough to be the wife even of a Strathdene. He told Kedzie that he wished to God he could marry her. She answered fervently that she wished to God he could.

He asked her "You don't really love that Dyckman fella, do you?"

"I don't really love anybody but you," said Kedzie. "You are the first man I have really truly loved."

She meant it and it may have been true. She said it with sincerity at least. One usually does. At any rate, it sounded wonderful to Strathdene and he determined to make her his. He would let England muddle along somehow till he made this alliance with the beautiful Missourienne. But Kedzie's plight was again what it had been; she had a husband extra. In some cases the husband is busy enough with his own affairs to let the lover trot alongside, like the third horse which the Greeks called the *pareoros*. But neither Jim nor Strathdene would be content with that sort of team-work, and Kedzie least of all.

She and Strathdene agreed that love would find the way, and Kedzie suggested that Jim would probably be decent enough to arrange the whole matter. He had an awfully clever lawyer, too.

Strathdene had braved nearly every peril in life except marriage. He was determined to take a shy at that. He and Kedzie talked their honeymoon plans with the boyishness and girlishness of nineteen and sixteen.

Then Kedzie remembered Gilfoyle. She had thanked her stars that she told Dyckman the truth about him in time. And now she was confronted with the same situation. Since her life was repeating its patterns, it would be foolish to ignore the lessons. So after some hesitation she told the Marquess that Jim Dyckman was not her

first, but her second. She told it very tragically, made quite a good story of it.

But the Marquess had been intrepid enough to laugh when, out of a large woolly cloud a mile aloft, a German flying-machine had suddenly charged him at a hundred miles an hour. He was calm enough now to laugh at the menace of Kedzie's past rushing out of the pink cloud about her.

"The more the merrier," he said. "The third time's the charm."

He sighed when he was alone and thought it rather shabby that Cupid should land him at last with a second-handed, a third-hearted arrow. But, after all, these were war times and Economy was the universal watchword. The arrow felt very cozy.

CHAPTER III

UNSELFISHNESS is an acquired art. Children rarely have it. That is why the Greeks represented love of a certain kind as a boy, selfish, treacherous, ingratiating, blind to appearances, naïf, gracefully ruthless.

Kedzie and Strathdene were enamoured of each other. They were both zealots for experience, restless and reckless in their zest of life. As soon as they were convinced of their love, every restraint became an illegal restraint, illegal because they felt that only the law of love had jurisdiction over them.

When Kedzie received a telegram from Jim that he had secured a leave of absence for thirty days and would be in Newport in four she felt cruelly used. She forgot how she had angled for Jim and hustled him into matrimony.

She was afraid of him now. She thought of him as many women in captured cities once regarded and have recently again regarded the triumphing enemy as one who would count beauty the best part of the booty.

Her loyalty to Strathdene was compromised, her delicacy was horrified. She was distraught with her plight.

She had to tell the news to Strathdene and he went into frenzies of jealousy. She had pledged herself to be his as soon as she could lift the Dyckman mortgage. If a man is ever going to be jealous he should certainly find occasion for the passion when he is betrothed to the wife of a returning soldier. Strathdene ought to have been on his way back to the aviation-camp, but he had earned the right to humor his nerves, and Kedzie was testing them beyond endurance.

It was a tragical-comical dilemma for Kedzie. Even she, with her gift for self-forgiveness, could not quite see how she was to explain prettily to her husband that in his absence she had fallen in love with another man. Wives are not supposed to fall in love while their husbands are at the wars. It has been done, but it is hard to prettify.

Kedzie beat her forehead in vain for a good-looking explanation. She was still hunting one when Jim came back. He telegraphed her that he would come right through to Newport, and asked her to meet him at the train. She dared not refuse. She simply could not keep her glib promises to Strathdene. It seemed almost treason to the country for a wife to give her warrior a cold welcome after his tropical service. She met him at the Newport station. He was still in uniform. He had taken no other clothes to Texas with him and had not stopped to buy any. He was too anxious about his mother to pause in New York. He had telegraphed his tailor to fit him out and his valet to pack his things and bring them to Newport.

Kedzie found him very brown and gaunt, far taller even than she remembered. She was more afraid of him than ever. Strathdene was only a little taller than she. She was afraid to tell Jim that she was another's.

But she made a poor mimicry of perfect bliss. Jim was not critical. She was more beautiful than he remembered her. He told her so, and she was flattered by his courtship, miserably treacherous as she felt.

She was proud to be a soldier's wife. She was jealous now of his concern for his mother. He had to go see her first. He was surprised to learn that Kedzie was not living with her. His mother had begun to improve from the moment she had Jim's telegram. But her eyes on Kedzie were terrible.

Jim did not notice the tension. He was too happy. He was sick of soldiering. His old uniform was like a convict's stripes. He was childishly ambitious to get

into long trousers again. For nearly half a year he had buttoned his breeches at the knee and housed his calves in puttees and his feet in army brogans.

It was like a Christmas morning among new toys for him to put on mufti, and take it off. A bath-tub full of hot water was a paradise regained. Evening clothes with a big white shirt and a top-hat were robes of ascension. But the clothes made to his old measurements were worlds too wide for his shrunk shanks. He had lost tons, he said, in Texas.

Before daybreak the first morning he terrified his cell-mate, Kedzie, by starting up in his sleep with a gasp: "Was that reveille? My God, I'll be late!"

The joy of finding himself no longer in a tent and of falling back on his pillow was worth the bad dream. Life was one long bad dream to Kedzie. She was guilty whichever way she turned, and afraid of both men.

Jim had a valet to wait on him. He had the problem of selecting his scarf and his socks for the morning. Jim had come into a lot of money. He had been earning a bank clerk's salary, with no way of spending it. And now he had a bank to spend and a plenty of places to throw it.

But it was hard for him to believe that he was a free man again. He was amazed to find Newport without cactus and without a scorpion. He kept looking for a scorpion on his pillow. He found one there, but did not recognize her.

Jim was as much of a parvenu in Newport as Kedzie had ever been. He swept her away at times by his juvenile enthusiasm and she neglected Strathdene atrociously for a week.

A large part of the colony had decamped for New York and Boston and Chicago, but those that remained made a throng for Jim. His mother was not well enough to be moved back to New York, but his sister had reached England safely and he was happy in his luxuries.

But he was the only one that was. His mother was

bitter against Kedzie for having fed the gossips. Kedzie was assured that life with Jim had nothing new to offer and she resented him as a barrier between herself and the glory of her future with Strathdene and "the stately homes of England."

Her mother and father arrived in Newport. Kedzie tried to suppress them for fear that Strathdene might feel that they were the last two back-breaking straws. But she needed a confidante and she told her mother the situation.

Mrs. Thropp, like Kedzie, had an ambition that expanded as fast as opportunity allowed. She was dazzled by the thought of being elevated to the peerage. She supposed it made her a relative of royalty. She who had once dreamed of being neighborly with the great Mrs. Dyckman was now imagining herself exchanging crocheting formulas with Queen Mary. She was saying she had always heard the Queen well spoke of. And Adna Thropp spoke very highly of "George."

They agreed that it was their sacred duty to place the name of Thropp as high as it could go, cost what it would.

"After all," said Adna one day, looking up from an article in a Sunday paper—"after all, why ain't Thropp as likely a name as Wettin? Or Hohenzollern? And what was Romanoff but an ordinary family once?"

The only thing that seemed to stand in Kedzie's way was the odious name of Dyckman.

"What's Dyckman, anyway?" said Mrs. Thropp. "Nothin' but a common old Dutch name."

But how to shake it off was the problem. Kedzie had to cling to Strathdene with one hand while she tried to release herself from the Dyckmans with the other.

She had a dreadful feeling that she might lose them both if she were not exceedingly careful and exceedingly lucky.

Help came to her unexpectedly from Charity Coe, unexpectedly, though Charity was always helping Kedzie.

CHAPTER IV

CHARITY COE had been tormented by the spectacle of her friend's wife flirting recklessly with the young Marquess of Strathdene while her husband was at the Border with the troops. But she was far more sharply wrung when she saw Kedzie flirting with her husband, playing the devoted wife with all her might and getting away with it to perfection.

There is hardly anything our eyes bring us that is more hideous than known disloyalty successfully masquerading as fidelity. The Judas kiss is not to be surpassed in human detestation.

With almost all the world in uniform, Newport welcomed the sight of one of her own men returned even from what was rather a siesta than a campaign, and old Mrs. Noxon insisted on giving a big party for Jim. She insisted so strongly that Kedzie did not dare refuse, though she had vowed never to step inside the grounds where she had made her Newport début as a hired nymph.

Charity tried to escape by alleging a journey to New York, but Mrs. Noxon browbeat her into staying. Charity did not know that Strathdene was invited till she saw him come in with the crowd. Neither did Kedzie. Old Mrs. Noxon may have invited him for spite against Kedzie or just as an international courtesy to the most distinguished foreigner in town.

She introduced Jim and the Marquess, saying, "You great warriors should know each other."

Jim felt sheepish because he had been to no war and Strathdene felt sheepish because Jim was so much taller

than he. He looked up at him as Napoleon looked enviously up at men who had no glory but their altitude. Strathdene was also sheepish because Jim said, very simply:

"Do you know my wife?"

If he had not been so tall that he saw only the top of Kedzie's coiffure he would have seen that her face was splashed with red. She mumbled something while Strathdene stammered, "Er—yes—I have had that privilege." He felt a sinking sensation as deadly as when he had his first fall at the aviation school.

Kedzie dragged Jim away and paid violent attention to him all through dinner. Her sympathy was entirely for her poor Strathdene. She was afraid he would commit suicide or return to England without her, and she could not imagine how to get rid of Jim. Then she caught sight of Charity Coe, and greeted her with a smile of sincere delight.

For once Kedzie loved Charity. Suddenly it came upon her what a beautiful solution it would be for everybody if Jim could take Charity and leave Kedzie free to take Strathdene. She told herself that Jim would be ever so much happier so, for the poor fellow would suffer terribly when he found that his Kedzie really could not pretend to love him any longer. Kedzie felt quite tearful over it. She was an awfully good-hearted little thing. To turn him over to Charity would be a charming arrangement, perfectly decent, and no harm to anybody. If only the hateful laws did not forbid the exchange—dog-on 'em, anyway!

The more Kedzie studied Charity the more suitable she seemed as a successor. Her heart warmed to her and she forced an opportunity to unload Jim on Charity immediately after dinner.

There was music for the encouragement of conversation, an expensively famous prima donna and a group of strings brought down from the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The prima donna sang Donna Elvira's ferocious aria full of indignation at discovering Don Giovanni's Don Juanity.

Charity, noting that Kedzie had flitted straight to Strathdene and was trying to appease his cold rage, felt an envy of the prima donna, who was enabled to express her feelings at full lung power with the fortissimo reinforcement of several powerful musicians. The primeval woman in Charity longed for just such a howling prerogative, but the actual Charity was so cravenly well-bred that she dared not even say to her dearest friend, "Jim, old man, you ought to go over and wring the neck of that little cat of yours."

Jim sat beaming at Kedzie and Kedzie beamed back while she murmured sweet everythings to her little Marquess. Jim seemed to imagine that he had left her in such a pumpkin shell as Mr. Peter P. Pumpkineater left his wife in, and kept her so very well. But Kedzie was not that kind of kept or keepable woman.

Jim would have expected that if Kedzie were guilty of any spiritual corruption it would show on her face. People will look for such things. But she was still young and pretty and ingenuous and seemed incapable of duplicity. And indeed such treachery was no more than a childish turning from one toy to another. The traitors and traitresses have no more sense of obligation than a child feels for a discarded doll.

Jim paid Charity the uncomfortable compliment of feeling enough at home with her to say, "Well, Charity, that little wife of mine takes to the English nobility like a duck seeing its first pond, eh?"

"She seems to be quite at her ease," was all that Charity could say. Now she felt herself a sharer in the wretched intrigue, as treacherous as Kedzie, no better friend than Kedzie was wife, because with a word she could have told Jim what he ought to have known, what he was almost the only person in the room that did not know. Yet her jaw locked and her tongue balked at the

mere thought of telling him. She protected Kedzie, and not Jim; felt it abominable, but could not brave the telling.

She resolved that she would rather brave the ocean and get back to Europe where there were things she could do.

The support of all the French orphans she had adopted had made deep inroads in her income, but her conscience felt the deeper inroads of neglected duty.

It was like Charity to believe that she had sinned heinously when she had simply neglected an opportunity for self-sacrifice. When other people applauded their own benevolence if they said, "How the soldiers must suffer! Poor fellows!" Charity felt ashamed if her sympathy were not instantly mobilized for action.

A great impatience to be gone rendered her suddenly frantic. While she encouraged Jim to talk of his experiences in Texas she was making her plans to sail on the first available boat.

If the boat were sunk by a submarine or a mine, death in the strangling seas would be preferable to any more of this drifting among the strangling problems of a life that held no promise of happiness for her. She felt gagged with the silence imposed upon her by the code in the very face of Kedzie's disloyalty, a disloyalty so loathsome that seeing was hardly believing.

It seemed inconceivable that a man or woman pledged in holy matrimony could ever be tempted to an alien embrace. And yet she knew dozens of people who made a sport of infidelity. Her own husband had found temptation stronger than his pledge. She wondered how long he would be true to Zada, or she to him. Charity had suffered the disgrace of being insufficient for her husband's contentment, and now Jim must undergo the same disgrace with Kedzie. It was a sort of post-nuptial jilt.

Of course Charity had no proof that Kedzie had been more than brazenly indiscreet with Strathdene, but that very indifference to gossip, that willingness to stir up

slander, seemed so odious that nothing could be more odious, not even the actual crime.

Besides, Charity found it hard to assume that a woman who held her good name cheap would hold her good self less cheap, since reputation is usually cherished longer than character.

In any case, Charity was smothering. Even Mrs. Noxon's vast drawing-room was too small to hold her and Jim and Kedzie and Strathdene. America was too strait to accommodate that jangling quartet.

She rose abruptly, thrust her hand out to Jim and said:

"Good night, old man. I've got to begin packing."

"Packing for where? New York?"

"Yes, and then France."

"I've told you before, I won't let you go."

And then it came over him that he had no right even to be dejected and alarmed at Charity's departure. Charity felt in the sudden relaxing of his handclasp some such sudden check. She smiled patiently and went to tell Kedzie good night.

Kedzie broke out, "Oh, don't go—yet!" then caught herself. She also for quite a different reason must not regret Charity's departure. Charity smiled a smile of terrifying comprehension, shook her head, and went her ways.

And now Jim, released, wandered over and sat down by Kedzie just as she was telling Strathdene the most important things.

She could not shake Jim. He would not talk to anybody else. She wished that Charity had taken Jim with her. Strathdene was as comfortable as a spy while Jim talked. Jim seemed so suspiciously amiable that Strathdene wondered how much he knew.

Jim did not look like the sort of man who would know and be complacent, but even if he were ignorant Strathdene was too outright a creature to relish the necessity for casual chatter with the husband of his sweetheart.

He, too, made a resolution to take the first boat available. He would rather see a submarine than be one.

Strathdene also suddenly bolted, saying: "Sorry, but I've got to run myself into the hangar. My doctor says I'm not to do any night flying."

And now Kedzie was marooned with Jim. She was in a panic about Strathdene; a fantastic jealousy assailed her. To the clandestine all things are clandestine! What if he were hurrying away to meet Charity? Charity returned to Kedzie's black books, and Jim joined her there.

"Let's go home," said Kedzie, in the least honeymoony of tones.

Jim said, "All right, but why the sudden vinegar?"

"I hate people," said Kedzie.

"Are husbands people?" said Jim.

"Yes!" snapped Kedzie.

She smiled beatifically as she wrung Mrs. Noxon's hand and perjured herself like a parting guest. And that was the last smile Jim saw on her fair face that night.

He wondered why women were so damned unreasonably whimsical. They may be damned, but there is usually a reason for their apparent whims.

CHAPTER V

THE next day Kedzie was still cantankerous, as it was perfectly natural that she should be. She wanted to be a Marchioness and sail away to the peerful sky. And she could not cut free from her anchor. The Marquess was winding up his propeller to fly alone.

Jim, finding her the poorest of company, called on his mother. She was well enough to be very peevish. So he left her and wandered about the dull town. He had no car with him and he saw a racer that caught his fancy. It had the lean, fleet look of a thoroughbred horse, and the dealer promised that it could triple the speed limit. He went out with a demonstrator and the car made good the dealer's word. It ran with such zeal that Jim was warned by three different policemen on the Boston Post Road that he would be arrested the next time he came by in such haste.

He decided to try it out again at night on other roads. He told the dealer to fill up the tank and see to the lights. The dealer told the garage man and the garage man said he would.

That evening at dinner Jim invited Kedzie to take a spin. She said that she had to spend the evening with her mother, who was miserable. Jim said, "Too bad!" and supposed that he'd better run in and say "Howdy-do" to the poor soul. Kedzie hastily said that she would be unable to see him. She would not even let Jim ride her over in his new buzz-wagon.

Again he made the profane comment to himself that women are unreasonable. Again this statement was due to ignorance of an excellent reason.

Kedzie had tried all day to get in touch with Strathdene. When she ran him down at length by telephone he was dismally dignified and terrifyingly patriotic. His poor country needed him and he must return.

This meant that Kedzie would lose her first and doubtless her last chance at the marquisate. She pleaded for a conference. He assented eagerly, but the problem was where to confer. She dared not invite him to the house she had rented, for Jim would be there. She could not go to Strathdene's rooms at the Hilltop Inn. She thought of the apartment she had stowed her mother in, and asked him there. Then she telephoned her mother to suppress dad and keep out of sight.

She was afraid to have Jim take her to her mother's address lest her woeful luck should bring Strathdene and Jim together at the door. That was her excellent reason for rebuffing her husband's courtesy and setting out alone.

Her mother was only too willing to abet Kedzie's forlorn hope. It was the forlornness of Kedzie that saved her. When Strathdene saw her in her exquisite despair he was helpless. He was no Hun to break the heart of so sweet a being, and he believed her when she told him that she would die if he tried to cross the perilous ocean without her. She told him that she would throw herself on Jim's mercy the next day and implore her freedom. He would not refuse her, she assured him, for Jim was really awfully generous, whatever faults he might have.

Strathdene could well believe that she would have her way with her husband since he found her absolutely irresistible himself. The conference lasted long, and they parted at last as Romeo and Juliet would have parted if Juliet had been married to the County Paris before Romeo met her.

Kedzie even promised Strathdene that she would not wait till the morning, but would at once demand her husband's consent to the divorce. It was only on such an

understanding that Strathdene could endure to intrust his delicate treasure to the big brute's keeping.

Kedzie entered her home with her oration all primed. But Jim was not there. He did not come home that night. Kedzie's anxiety was not exactly flattering, but it was sincere.

She wondered if some accident had befallen him in his new car. She really could not bear the thought of losing another husband by a motor accident. Suppose he should just be horribly crippled. Then she could never divorce him.

She hated her thoughts, but she could not be responsible for them. Her mind was like a lighthouse in a storm. It was not to blame for what wild birds the winds brought in from the black to dash against her soul.

But Jim was neither killed nor crippled. The cards still ran for Kedzie.

CHAPTER VI

SPEAKING of cards, Jim was like a gambler with a new pack of them and nobody to play with.

He darted hither and yon in his racer, childishly happy in its paces, childishly lonely for somebody to show off before. As he ran along the almost deserted sea road he passed the Noxon home.

He knew that Charity was visiting there. He wondered which of the lighted windows was hers. After much backing and filling he turned in and ran up to the steps. He got out and was about to ring the bell when he heard a piano. He went along the piazza to a window, and, peering in, saw Charity playing. She was alone in the music-room and very sadly beautiful.

He tapped on the window. She was startled, rose to leave the room. He tapped again, remembering an old signal they had had as boy and girl lovers. She paused. He could see her smile tenderly. She came forward to the window and stared out. He stared in. Only a pane of glass parted the tips of their flattened noses. It was a sort of sterilized Eskimo kiss.

The window was a door. Charity opened it and invited Jim in, wondering but strangely comforted. He invited her out. He explained about his gorgeous new car and his loneliness and begged her to take the air.

She put back her hands to indicate her inappropriate costume, a flimsy evening gown of brilliant color.

"Mrs. Noxon has gone out to dinner. I was to go with her, but I begged off. I'm going to New York to-morrow, and I was blue and—"

"And so am I. I've got an extra coat in my car, and the night is mild."

"No, I'd better not."

"Aw, come along!"

"No-o—"

"Yes!"

"All right. I'll get a veil for my hair."

She closed the French window and hurried away. She reappeared at the front door and shut it stealthily after her.

"Nobody saw me go. You must get me back before Mrs. Noxon comes home, or there'll be a scandal."

"Depend on me!" said Jim.

Muffling their laughter like two runaways, they stole down the steps. Her high-heeled slippers slipped and she toppled against him. She caught him off his balance, and his arms went about her to save her and himself. If he had been Irish, he would have said that he destroyed himself, for she was so unexpectedly warm and silken and lithe that she became instantly something other than the Charity he had adored as a sad, sweet deity.

He realized that she was terribly a woman.

They were no longer boy and girl out on a gay little lark. They were a man unhappily married and a woman unhappily unmarried, setting forth on a wild steed for a wild ride through the reluctant autumn air. The neighboring sea gave out the stored-up warmth of summer, and the moon with the tilted face of a haloed nun yearned over them.

When Jim helped Charity into the car her arm seemed to burn in his palm. He hesitated a moment, and a thought fluttered through his mind that he ought not to hazard the adventure. But another thought chased it away, a thought of the idiocy of being afraid, and another thought of how impossible it was to ask her to get out and go back.

He found the coat, a heavy, short coat, and held it for her, saw her ensconced comfortably, stepped in and closed

the door softly. The car went forward as smoothly as a skiff on a swift, smooth water.

Charity was not so solemn as Jim. She was excited and flattered by such an unforeseen diversion breaking in on her doleful solitude.

"It's been so long since a man asked me to go buggy-riding," she said, "that I've forgotten how to behave. I'm getting to be a regular old maid, Jim."

"Huh!" was all that Jim could think of.

It was capable of many interpretations—reproof, anger at fate, polite disbelief, deprecation.

Jim tried to run away from his peculiar and most annoying emotions. But Charity went with him. She looked back and said:

"Funny how the moon rides after us in her white limousine."

"Huh!" said Jim.

"Is that Mexican you're speaking?" she chided.

"I was just thinking," Jim growled.

"What?"

"Oh, nothing much—except what a ghastly shame it is that so—so—well, I don't know what to call you—but well, a woman like you—that you should be living alone with nothing better to do than run the gantlet of those God-awful submarines and probably get blown up and drowned, or, worse yet, spend your days breaking your heart nursing a lot of poor mangled, groaning Frenchmen that get shot to pieces or poisoned with gas or— Oh, it's rotten! That's all it is: it's rotten!"

"Somebody has to take care of them."

"Oh, I know; but it oughtn't to be you. If there was any manhood in this country, you'd have Americans to nurse."

"There are Americans over there, droves of them."

"Yes, but they're not wearing our uniform. We ought to be over there under our own flag. I ought to be over there."

"Maybe you will be. I'll go on ahead and be waiting for you."

There is nothing more pitiful than sorrow that tries to smile, and Jim groaned:

"Oh, Charity Coe! Charity Coe!"

He gripped the wheel to keep from putting his hand out to hers. And they went in silence, thinking in the epic elegy of their time.

Jim drove his car up to the end of Rhode Island and across to Tiverton; then he left the highway for the lonelier roads. The car charged the dark hills and galloped the levels, a black stallion with silent hoofs and dreadful haste. There was so much death, so much death in the world! The youth and strength and genius of all Europe were going over the brink eternally in a Niagara of blood.

And the sea that Charity was about to venture on, the sea whose estuaries lapped this sidelong shore so innocently with such tender luster under the gentle moon, was drawing down every day and every night ships and ships and ships with their treasures of labor and their brave crews till it seemed that the floor of the ocean must be populous with the dead.

Charity felt quite close to death. A very solemn tenderness of farewell endeared the beautiful world and all its doomed creatures. But most dear of all was this big, simple man at her side, the man she ought to have married. It was all her fault that she had not. She owed him a profound eternal apology, and she had not the right to pay the debt—that is, so long as she lived she had not the right. But if they were never to meet again—then she was already dying to him.

It was important that she should not depart this life without making restitution of what she owed. She had owed Jim Dyckman the love he had pleaded for from her and would not get from anyone else.

He had a right to love, and it was to be eternally denied to him. He would go on bitterly grieved and shamed to

think that nobody could love him, for Charity had repulsed him, and some day he would learn that Kedzie had deceived him.

Lacking the courage to warn him against his wife, Charity felt that she must have at least the courage to say:

"Good-by, Jim. I have been loving you of late with a great love."

There would be no injury done to Kedzie thus, for Charity would speak as a ghost, an impalpable departed one. There would be no sin—only a beautiful expiation by confession. She was enfranchised of earthly restraints, enfranchised as the dead are from mortal obligations.

But the moods that are so holy, so pure, and so vast while they are moods resent words. Words are like tin cups to carry the ocean in. It is no longer an ocean when a bit of it is scooped up. It is only a little brackish water, odious to drink and quenching no thirst.

Charity could not devise the first phrase of her huge and oceanic emotion. It would have been only a proffer of brine that Jim could not have relished from her. He understood better her silence. They went blindly on and on, letting the road lead them and the first whim decide which turn to take and which to pass.

And so they were eventually lost in the land as they were lost in their mood.

And after a time of wonderful enthusiasms in their common grief the realities began to claim them back. A loud report like a pistol-shot announced that the poetry of motion had become prose.

Jim stopped the car and became a blacksmith while he went through the tool-box, found a jack for the wheel, laboriously unshipped the demountable rim, replaced it with the extra wheel, and set forth again.

The job had not improved the cleanliness of his hands nor spared the chastity of his shirt-bosom. But the car had four wheels to go on, and they regained a main road

at last and found a signboard announcing, "Tiverton, 18 miles." That meant thirty miles to Newport.

Charity looked at her watch. It brought her back from the timelessness of her meditation to the world where the clock had a great deal to say about what was respectable and what not.

"Good Lord!" she groaned. "Mrs. Noxon is home long ago and scared or shocked to death. We must fly!"

They flew, angry, both of them, at having to hurry back to school and a withering reprimand, as if they were still mere brats. Gradually the car began to refuse the call for haste. Its speed sickened, gasped, died.

Jim swore quite informally, and raged: "I told that infernal hound to fill the tank. He forgot! The gas. is gone."

Charity shrugged her shoulders. "I deserved it," she said. "I only hope I don't get you into trouble. What will your wife say?"

"What won't she say? But I'm thinking about you."

"It doesn't matter about me. I've got nobody who cares enough to scold me."

They were suddenly illumined by the headlights of an approaching car. They shielded their faces from the glare instinctively. They felt honest, but they did not look honest out here together.

The car was checked and a voice called from the blur, "Want any help?"

"No, thanks," Jim answered from his shadow.

The car rolled on. While Jim made a vain post-mortem examination of the car's machinery Charity looked about for a guide-post. She found a large signboard proclaiming "Viewcrest Inn, 1 mile." She told Jim.

He said: "I know of it. It has a bad name, but so long as the gasolene is good—I'll go get some. Make yourself at home." He paused. "I can't leave you alone here in the wilderness at midnight."

"I'll go along."

"In those high-heeled shoes?"

"And these low-necked gown," sighed Charity. "Oh, what a fool, what a stupid fool I've been!"

But she set forth. Jim offered his arm. She declined it at first, but she was glad enough of it later. They made an odd-looking couple, both in evening dress, promenading a country road. All the wealth of both of them was insufficient to purchase them so much as a street-car ride. They were paupers—the slaves, not the captains, of their fate. Charity stumbled and tottered, her ankles wrenched by the ruts, her stilted slippers going to ruin. Jim offered to carry her. She refused indignantly. She would have accepted a lift from any other vehicle now, but none appeared. The only lights were in the sky, where a storm was practising with fireworks.

"Just our luck to get drenched," said Jim.

It was about the only bad luck they escaped, but the threat of it lent Charity speed. They passed one farm, whose dogs rushed out and bayed at them carnivorously.

"That's the way people will bark when they find out about our innocent little picnic," said Charity.

"They're not going to find out," said Jim.

"Trying to keep it secret gives it a guilty look," said Charity.

"What people don't know won't hurt 'em," said Jim.

"What they do imagine will hurt us," said Charity.

At the top of a knoll in a clandestine group of trees they found "Viewcrest Inn." It was dark but for a dim light in the office. The door of that was locked.

Trade was dull, now that the Newport season was over, and only an occasional couple from Fall River, Providence, or New Bedford tested the diminished hospitality. But to-night there had been a concurrence of visitors. Jim rattled at the door. A waiter appeared, yawning candidly. He limped to the door with a gait that Kedzie would have recognized.

He peered out and shook his head, waving the intruders away. Jim shook the knob and glowered back.

The waiter, who, in the classic phrase, was "none other than" Skip Magruder, unlocked the door.

"Nothin' doin', folks," said Skip. "Standin' room only. Not a room left."

"I don't want any of your dirty rooms," said Jim. "I want some gasolene."

"Bar's closed," said Skip, who had a nimble wit.

"I said gasolene!" said Jim, menacingly.

"Sorry, boss, but the last car out took the last drop we had in the pump. We'll have some more to-morrow mornin'."

"My God!" Jim whispered.

Then the storm broke. A thunder smash like the bolt of an indignant Heaven. It turned on all the faucets above.

"Where's the telephone?" Jim demanded.

"T. D.," said Skip.

"What's that?"

"Temporary discontinued." Skip grew confidential. "The boss was a little slow on the pay and they shut him off. We're takin' in a lot of dough to-night, though, and he'll prob'ly get it goin' to-morrow all right."

To-morrow again! Jim snarled back at the pack of wolfish circumstances closing in on him. He turned to Charity.

"We've got to stay here."

Charity "went white," as the saying is. The rain streamed down.

"We 'ain't a room left," said Skip.

"You've got to have," said Jim.

"Have to speak to the artshiteck," said Skip. Then he rubbed his head, trying to get out an idea by massage. "There's the poller. Big lounge there, but not made up. Would you and your wife wish the poller?"

He dragged the "wife" with a tone that nearly got

him throttled. But Jim paused. A complicated thought held him. To protest that Charity was not his wife seemed hardly the most reassuring thing to do. He let the word go and ignored Skip's cynical intonation. Jim's knuckles ached to rebuke him, but he had not fought a waiter since his wild young days. And Skip was protected by his infirmity.

Charity was frightened and revolted, abject with remorse for such a disgusting consequence of such a sweet, harmless impulse. She was afraid of Jim's temper. She said:

"Take the parlor by all means."

"All right," said Jim.

Skip fumbled about the desk for a big book, and, finding it, opened it and handed Jim a pen.

"Register, please," said Skip.

"I will not."

"Rules of the house."

"What do I care about your rules!"

"Have to wake the boss, then."

"Give me the pen."

He started to write his own name; that left Charity's designation in doubt. He glanced at the other names. "Mr. and Mrs. George Washington" were there, "Mr. and Mrs. John Smith" twice, as well as "William Jones and wife."

Jim wondered if the waiter knew him. So many waiters did. At length, with a flash of angry impulse, he wrote: "James D—," paused, finished "Dysart," hesitated again, then put "Mr. and Mrs." before it. Skip read, and grinned. He did not know who Jim was, but he knew he was no Dysart.

Skip led the way to the parlor up-stairs, lighted the lights, and hastily disappeared, fearing that he might be asked to fetch something to eat or drink. He was so tired and sleepy that even the prospect of a tip did not interest him so much as the prospect of his cot in the

attic, where he could dream that he was in New York again.

Jim and Charity looked at each other. Jim munched his own curses, and Charity laughed and cried together. Jim's arms had an instinct for taking her to his heart, but he felt that he must be more respectful than ever since they were in so respectless a plight. She never seemed purer and sadder to him than then.

She noted how haggard and dismal he looked, and said, "Aren't you going to sit down?"

"No—not here," he said. "You curl up on that plush horror and get some rest."

"I will not!" said Charity.

"You will, too," said Jim. "You're a wreck, and I ought to be shot. Get some sleep, for God's sake!"

"What becomes of you?"

"I'll scout round and find a place in the office. I think there is a billiard-room. If worst comes to worst, I'll do what Mrs. Leslie Carter did in a play I saw—sleep on the dining-room table."

"Not less than a table d'hôte will hold you," Charity smiled, wanly.

"Don't worry about me. You go by-by and pray the Lord to forgive me and help us both."

He waved his hand to her in a heartbreak of bemocked and benighted tenderness and closed the door. He prowled softly about the office and the adjacent rooms, but found no place to sleep. He was in such a fever of wrath at himself that he walked out in the rain to cool his head. Then he sank into a chair, read an old Boston paper twice, and fell asleep among the advertisements.

He woke at daybreak. The rain had ended and he wandered out in the chill, wet grounds of the shabby inn. The morning light was merciless on the buildings, the leafless trees, and on his own costume. The promised view from the crest was swathed in haze—so was his outlook on the future.

His fury at the situation grew as he pondered it. He was like a tiger in a pit. He raged as much at himself as at the people who would take advantage of him. The ludicrousness of the situation added the ultimate torment. He could not save Charity except by ingenious deceptions which would be a proof of guilt if they did not succeed miraculously.

The dress he was in and the dress she was in were the very habiliments of guilt. Getting back to Newport in evening clothes would be the advertisement of their escapade. His expansive shirt-bosom might as well have been a sandwich-board. His broadcloth trousers and his patent-leather pumps would be worse than rags.

And Charity had no hat. There was an unmistakable dressed-up eveningness about them both.

This struck him as the first evil to remedy. As with an escaped convict, his prime necessity was a change of clothes. There was only one way to manage that. He went back to the hotel and found a startled early-morning waiter sweeping out the office. Jim asked where the nearest telephone was, and learned that it was half a mile away at a farm-house.

Jim turned up his collar, pulled down his motor-cap, and struck out along the muddy road. He startled the farmer's family and their large hands were not wide enough to hide their wider smiles.

On the long hike thither Jim had worked out his stratagem. He called up his house, or, rather, Kedzie's house, in Newport, and after much delay got his yawning valet to the telephone. He never had liked that valet less than now.

"That you, Dallam? My car broke down out in the country," he explained, every syllable a sugarless quinine pill in his throat. "That is to say, the gasolene gave out. I am in my evening clothes, so is—er—Mrs.—er—the lady I was with. I want you to bring me at once an outfit of day clothes, and a—one of my wife's long

motor-coats—a very long one—and one of her small hats. Then get out my wife's limousine and send the suit-case and the coat and hat to me here at the Viewcrest Inn, and tell the chauffeur to bring an extra can of gasolene."

A voice with an intolerable smile in it came back: "Very good, sir. I presume I'd better not waken Mrs. Dyckman?"

"Naturally not. I don't want to—er—alarm her."

"She was quite alarmed when you didn't come home, sir, last night."

"Well, I'll explain when I see her. Do you understand the situation?"

"Perfectly, sir."

Jim writhed at that. But he had done his best and he would take the worst.

The farmer gave him a ride to the hotel in his milk-wagon. When Jim rode up in a parody of state he saw Charity peeping from the parlor window. The morning light had made the situation plain to her. It did not improve on inspection. It took very little imagination to predict a disastrous event, though Jim explained the felicity of his scheme. He had planned to have Charity ride in in the limousine alone, while he took his own car back with the gasolene that was on the way.

The twain were compelled by their costume to stay in the parlor together. They were ferociously hungry and ordered breakfast at last. It took forever to get it, for guests of that hotel were not ordinarily early risers.

Skip Magruder, dragged from his slumbers to serve the meal, found Charity and Jim in the room where he had left them. He made such vigorous efforts to overlook their appearance in bedraggled dinner clothes at a country breakfast that Jim threatened to break his head. Skip grew surly and was ordered out.

After breakfast Jim and Charity waited and waited, keeping to the parlor lest the other guests see them.

At last the limousine arrived. As soon as he heard it

coming Jim hurried to the window to make sure that it was his—or, rather, his wife's.

It was—so much his wife's that she stepped out of it. Also her mother. Also her father. They advanced on the hotel.

Jim and Charity were stupefied. There was a look on Kedzie's face that frightened him.

"She means business," he groaned.

Charity sighed: "Divorce! And me to be named!"

"She won't do that. She owes you everything."

"What an ideal chance to pay off the debt!"

"Don't you worry. I'll protect you," Jim insisted.

"How?" said Charity.

"I'll fight the case to the limit."

"Are you so eager to keep your wife?" said Charity.

"No. I never did love her. I'll never forgive her for this."

But he had not the courage to go and meet Kedzie and her mother and her father. They were an unconscionable time coming.

He did not know that Kedzie and Skip Magruder were renewing old acquaintance.

While he waited the full horror of his dilemma came over him. Kedzie would undoubtedly sue him for divorce. If he lost, Charity would be publicly disgraced. If he won, he would be tied to Kedzie for life.

CHAPTER VII

A QUICK temper is an excellent friend for bolstering up an ailing conscience, especially if itself is bolstered by an inability to see the point of view of the other party to a conflict.

Kedzie's wrath at Charity justified to Kedzie any cruelty, especially as Kedzie was all harrowed up by the fear of losing the Marquess of Strathdene. And Kedzie loved Strathdene as much as she could ever love anybody.

For one thing Strathdene was fiercely jealous of her—and the poor child had been simply famished for a little jealousy. Her first husband had hardly known what the word meant. Before their marriage Gilfoyle had permitted her to dance the Greek dances without paying her the compliment of a beating. After their marriage he had gone to Chicago to earn a living and left her alone in New York City where there were millions of rivals.

Her second husband had been very philosophical about her career and had taken the news of her previous marriage with disgusting stoicism. Finally he had gone to the Mexican Border for an indefinite stay, leaving her to her own devices and the devices of any man who came along. It was too much like leaving a diamond outdoors: it cheapened the diamond.

But Strathdene—ah, Strathdene! He turned blue at the mention of Kedzie's husband. When Jim came back from Texas and Kedzie had to be polite to him Strathdene almost had hydrophobia. He accused Kedzie of actually welcoming Jim. He charged her with polyandry. He threatened to shoot her and her husband and himself.

He comported himself unlike any traditional Englishman of literature. He was, in fact, himself and what he did was like him. He was a born aviator. His heart was used to racing at unheard-of speeds. He could sustain superhuman exaltations and depressions.

Being in love with him was like going up in an airship with him, which was one of Kedzie's ambitions for the future. She dreamed of a third honeymoon *in excelsis*.

Strathdene told her that if she ever looked at another man after she married him he would take her up ten thousand feet in the clouds, set his airship on fire, and drop with her as one cinder into the ocean. What handsomer tribute could any woman ask of a man? He was a lover worth fighting for.

But she had felt uncertain of winning him till that wonderful morning when Jim did not come back home. She woke up early all by herself and heard the valet answer Jim's call from Viewcrest.

She had made a friend of Dallam by her flirtation with the nobility. The poor fellow had suffered tortures from the degradation of his master's alliance with a commoner like Kedzie until Kedzie developed her alliance with the Marquess. Then his valetic soul expanded again.

He looked upon her as his salvation.

Over the telephone she heard him now promising Jim that he would not tell Kedzie. If Jim's old valet, Jules, had not gone to France and his death he would have saved Jim from infernal distresses, but this substitute had a malignant interest in his master's confusion. Dallam proceeded forthwith to rap at Mrs. Dyckman's door and spoke through it, deferentially:

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but could I have a word?"

Kedzie wrapped herself in a bath-robe and opened the door a chink to hear the rest of what she had heard in part. The valet had no collar on and his overnight

beard not off, and he, too, was in a bath-robe. Man and mistress stood there like genius and madness, "and thin partitions did their bounds divide."

"Very sorry to trouble you, ma'am," he said, "but I'm compelled to. The master has just telephoned me that his car broke down at the Viewcrest Inn out Tiverton way, and he wants his morning clothes, and also—if you'll pardon me, ma'am—he instructed me to send him a long motor-coat of yours and a large hat and your limousine. I was directed not to—ahem—to trouble you about it, ma'am, but I 'ardly dared."

He helped her out so perfectly that she had no need to say anything more than, "Quite right."

She was glad that the door screened her from observation, for she went through a crisis of emotions, wrath and disgust at Jim's perfidy *versus* ecstasy and gratitude to him for it.

She beat her breast with her hand as if to keep her trembling heart from turning a somersault into her mouth. Then she spoke with a calm that showed how far she had traveled in self-control.

"Very good. You were quite right. Call the chauffeur and tell him to bring round my closed car. Then send me my maid and have the cook get me some coffee. Then you may telephone my mother and father and ask them to come over at once. Please send my car for them. You might have coffee for them also. For we'll all be riding out to—did you say Viewcrest Inn?"

"Yes, ma'am. Very good, ma'am. Thank you!"

He went away thinking to himself. He thought in cockney: "My Gawd! w'at a milit'ry genius! She dictites a horder loike a Proosian general. I'm beginnin' to fink she's gowing to do milord the mokkis prahd. There's no daht abaht it. Stroike me, if there is."

By the time Kedzie was dressed and coffeed her panicky father and mother were collected and fed, and she had selected her best motor-coat for the shroud of whatever

woman it was at Viewcrest. She dared not dream it was Charity.

She had time enough to tell her parents all there was to tell on the voyage, but she had no idea that her limousine was taking her to the very inn that Strathdene had lured her to on that night when he tested her worthiness of his respect.

It had been dark on that occasion and she had been in such a chaos that she had paid no heed to the name of the place or the dark roads leading thither.

She almost swooned when she reached the Viewcrest Inn and found herself confronted by Skip Magruder. And so did Skip. He had not recognized the back of her head before, but her face smote him now. There was no escaping him. Her beauty was enriched by her costume and her mien was ripened by experience, but she was unforgetably herself. He was still a waiter, and the apron he had on and the napkin he clutched might have been the same one he had when she first saw him.

When he saw her now again he gasped the name he had known her by: "Anitar! Anitar Adair! Well, I'll be—"

Then his face darkened with the memory of disprized love. He recalled the cruel answer, "Nothing doing," that she had indorsed on the stage-door letter he sent her long ago.

But the military genius that had guided Kedzie this morning inspired her still. She was not going to lose her victory for any flank attack from an ally in ambush. She sent out a flag of truce.

"Why, Skip!" she cried. "Dear old Skip! I want you to meet my father and mother. Mr. Magruder was terribly kind to me when I was alone and friendless in New York."

Mrs. Thropp had outgrown waiters and even Adna regretted the reversion to Nimrim that led him to shake hands and say, "Please to meecher."

The stupefied proprietor of the inn was begging for explanations of this unheard-of colloquy, but Skip flicked him away with his napkin as if he were a bluebottle fly and motioned Kedzie to a corner of the office. Kedzie explained, breathlessly:

"Skip, I'm in terrible trouble, and I'm so glad to find you here, for you never failed me. I was very rude to you when you sent me that note, but I—I was engaged to be married at the time and I didn't think it proper to see anybody. And—well, I'm getting my punishment now, for my husband is here with a strange woman—and—oh, it's terrible, Skip! My heart is broken, but you've got to help me. I know I can rely on you, can't I, dear old Skip?"

The girl was so efficient that she almost deserved her success. It cost her something, though, to beguile a waiter with intimate appeals that she might earn a title. But then in time of war no ally is to be scorned and the lowliest recruit is worth enlisting. A Christian can piously engage a Turk to help him whip another Christian.

When Kedzie pulled out the tremolo stop and looked up, big-eyed, and pouted at him, Skip was hers.

"Your husband, Anitar? Your husband here? Why, the low-life hound! I'll go up and kill him for you if you want me to."

Kedzie explained that she didn't want to get her dear Skip into any trouble, but she did want his help. Skip found her a good boarding-place the first time he met her, and now she had to dupe him into securing her furnished rooms and board in a castle. She may have rather encouraged him to imagine that once she was free from Jim she would listen once more to Skip. But there is no evidence on that point and he must have felt a certain awe of her. His pretty duckling had become so gorgeous a swan.

Her parley with Skip had delayed her march up-stairs to the attack, but Jim and Charity could only wait in

befuddled suspense, unwilling and afraid to attempt a flight

Kedzie went up-stairs at last, backed by her father and mother and Skip and the chauffeur with the suit-case of Jim's clothes. Kedzie was dazed at the sight of Charity.

But there was no need of any oration.

After a little sniffing and nodding of the head she spoke:

"Well, I thought as much! Jim, you telephoned for some things of mine and of yours. Here they are. There's a can of gasolene down-stairs for you. Here's your suit-case, and the coat and hat for Mrs. Cheever. I presume you will go back in your own car."

Jim nodded.

"Then we needn't keep you any longer. Mr. McNiven is your lawyer still, I suppose. I'll send my lawyer to him. Come along, mother—and father."

She led her little cohort down-stairs and bade Skip a very cordial *au revoir*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Dyckman divorce farce might have been as politely performed as *l'affaire Cheever*—or even more so than that, since practice makes perfect. At least a temporary secrecy could have been secured with leisureliness by a residence in another State.

But Kedzie felt as Zada did, that she simply could not wait, though her reason was well to the opposite. Zada had been afraid that a child would arrive before the divorce, but Kedzie that a gentleman would depart.

Strathdene was straining at the anchor like one of his own biplanes with the wind nudging its wings. In Europe they were shooting down airships by the score nearly every day and Strathdene wanted to go back. "It's not fair to the Huns," he said. "They haven't had a pot-shot at me for so long they'll forget I was ever over. And some of those men that were corporals when I made my Ace, are Aces now as well and they're crawling up on my score! I'll have to fly all the time to catch up."

But he wanted to take with him his beauty. He was jealous of Uncle Sam and afraid to trust Kedzie to him. The more inconvenient she became to him the more determined he grew to overcome the obstacles to her possession.

He abominated the necessity of taking his bride through the side door of the court-house to the altar, but he would not give her up. It looked, however, as if he would have to. And then he received mysteriously an assignment to the inspection of flying-machines purchased in the Amer-

ican market. Kedzie told him that it was a Heaven-sent answer to her prayers, and he believed it.

But it was his poor mother's work; she had written to a friend in the British Embassy imploring him to keep her precious boy out of France as long as possible. Hecatombs of gallant young lords were being butchered and she had lost a son, two brothers, a nephew, and unnumbered friends. The whole nobility of Europe was as deep in mourning as all the other grades of prestige. She wanted a brief respite from terror. She did not know till later to what further risks she was exposing her boy.

Kedzie was grimly resolute about getting her freedom from Jim in order to transfer it to Strathdene. She planned to manage it quietly for the sake of her own future. But a sickening mess was made of it. For Kedzie fell into the hands of a too, too conscientious lawyer. It is impossible to be loyal in all directions, and young Mr. Anson Beattie was loyal first to his wife and children, whom he loved devotedly. They needed money and clients came slowly to him.

His wife had relatives in Newport and they chanced to be visiting there. The relatives were shopkeepers, to whom Pet Bettany owed much money. That was how Kedzie came to consult Mr. Beattie. Kedzie telephoned Pet the moment she got back from the Viewcrest Inn, and Pet told her of Beattie.

When Kedzie drifted into his ken with a word of introduction from Pet Bettany he hailed her as a Heaven-sent messenger. She brought him advertisement, and big fees on a platter.

The very name of Dyckman was incense and myrrh. Mr. Beattie smelled gold. When Kedzie poured out her story and explained that the famous Mrs. Charity Cheever was the wreckress of her home Mr. Beattie saw head-lines everywhere.

If the Dyckmans had been a humble couple he would have tried to reconcile them, perhaps, or he would have

separated them with little noise. But it was noise he wanted. The longer and louder the trial the more free space Mr. Beattie would get.

"It Pays to Advertise" is a necessary motto for all professions. The lawyer is advertised by his hating enemies, Beattie said to himself, and to his ecstatic wife when he went to her room after Kedzie left. His wife would never have taken a divorce if divorces were distributed at every door like handbills. Mr. Beattie said to Mrs. Beattie:

"Soul o' my soul, I'm going to handle this case in such a way that it will stir up a smell from here to California. I'll get that little woman an alimony that will break all known records and I'll take a percentage of the gate receipts as they come in. I wouldn't trust my little client a foot away."

"Don't trust her too close, either," said his devoted spouse, who was just jealous enough to be remembered in time of stress.

Beattie was the sort of lawyer one reads about oftener than one meets, and he wanted to be read about. He had the almost necessary lawyer gift of beginning to hate the opposition as soon as he learned what it was. If Jim had engaged him he would have hated Kedzie with religious ardor. Kedzie engaged him; so he abominated Jim and everybody and everything associated with him from his name to his scarf-pin.

He warned Kedzie not to spend an hour under Jim Dyckman's roof, lest she seem to condone what she discovered. He advised her to disappear till Beattie was ready to strike.

That was the reason why there was no compromise, no concession, no politeness in the divorce. If collusion is vicious this case was certainly pure of it.

Jim was not permitted a quiet talk with Kedzie from the moment she found him at the Viewcrest Inn. Her arrival there plus her family had thrown him into a

stupor. It was a situation for a genius to handle, since the honester a man is the more he is confused at being found in a situation that looks dishonest. Jim was never less a genius than then. Even Charity, who usually found a word when a word was needed, said not one. What could she say? Kedzie ignored her, accused her of nothing, and did not linger.

When Jim and Charity, left alone together again, looked at each other they were too disgusted to regret that they had not been as guilty as they looked. Life had the jaundice in their eyes.

But they had to get back to the world by way of material things. Jim had to change his evening clothes. He asked Charity to wait in the office below. He pointed to the motor-coat and hat that Kedzie had brought and tossed on a lounge.

Charity recoiled from wearing Kedzie's cast-off clothes, or from disguising as Jim's wife, but her downcast eyes revealed her bare shoulders and arms and her delicate evening gown. They had been exquisitely appropriate to night and night lights, but they were ghastly in the day.

She put on Kedzie's mantle; it blistered her like the mantle Medea sent to her successor in her husband's love. She sat in the office and some of the guests passed through. She could see that they took her to be one of their sort, and shocks of red and white alternated through her skin.

When Jim was ready he came down with his evening clothes in the suit-case. The baggage was the final convincing touch. He picked up the gasolene-can and toted it that weary mile. One of the hotel servants offered to carry it, but Jim was in no mood for company. There are things that the wealthiest man does not want to have done for him.

They found the car studded with pools of water from the rain, and Charity shook out the cushions while Jim filled up the tank.

"Quite domestic," said Charity, in the last dregs of bitterness.

Jim did not answer. He flung the can over into a field and hopped into the car. He regretted that he had no spurs to dig into its sides, no curb bit to jerk. He owed his destruction to that car. For want of gasolene, the car was lost; for want of the car, a reputation was lost.

He thought with frenzy as he drove. He had little imagination, but it did not require an expert dreamer to foresee dire possibilities ahead. He was so sorry for Charity that he could have wept. He wanted to enfold her in his arms and promise her security. He wanted to stand in front of her and take in his own breast all the arrows of scorn that might shower upon her.

But the nearest approach to protection in his power lay along the lines of appearing to be indifferent to her. He had not been told of Kedzie's infatuation for Strathdene and he had not suspected it.

Charity was tempted to refer to it, but she felt that it would be contemptibly petty at the moment. So Jim was permitted to hope that he could find Kedzie, throw himself on her mercy and implore her to believe in his innocence. It was a sickly hope, and his heart filled with gall and with hatred of Kedzie and all she had brought on him.

He reached Newport with a terrific speed, and left Charity at Mrs. Noxon's to make her own explanations. Mrs. Noxon had defended Charity against gossip once before, but to defend her against appearances was too much to ask.

"Well-behaved people," she told Charity, "do not have appearances."

She was so cold that Charity froze also, and set her maid to packing. Mrs. Noxon's frigidity was a terrifying example of what she was to expect. She returned to New York on the first train. Jim was on it, too.

He had sped home, expecting to find Kedzie. She was

gone and none of the servants knew where. If he had found her in the ferocious humor he had arrived at he might have given her the sort of divorce popular in divorceless countries, where they annul the wife instead of the marriage. He might have sent Kedzie to the realm where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage—which should save a heap of trouble.

Jim fancied that Kedzie must have taken the train to New York, since she spoke of sending her lawyer to McNiven. It did not occur to him that she could find a New York lawyer in Newport.

He met Charity, and not Kedzie, on the train. That made bad look worse. But it gave Jim and Charity an opportunity to face the calamity that was impending. Jim tried to reassure Charity that he would keep her from suffering any public harm. The mere thought of her liability to notoriety, the realization that her long life of decency and devotion were at the mercy of the whim of a woman like Kedzie, drove her frantic.

She begged Jim to leave her to her thoughts and he went away to the purgatory of his own. Reaching New York, he returned to Charity to offer his escort to her home. She broke out, petulantly:

"Don't take me any more places, Jim, I beg you!"

"Forgive me," he mumbled, and relieved her of his compromising chivalry.

They went to their homes in separate taxicabs. Jim made haste to his apartment. Kedzie was not there and had not been heard from.

Late as it was, he set out on a telephone chase for McNiven and dragged him to a conference. It was midnight and Jim was haggard with excitement.

There are two people at least to whom a wise man tells the truth—his doctor and his lawyer. Neither of them has many illusions left, but both usually know fact when they get a chance to face it.

Jim had nothing to conceal from McNiven and his

innocence transpired through all his bewilderment. He told just what had happened in its farcical-funeral details. McNiven did not smile. Jim finished with all his energy:

"Sandy, you know that Charity is the whitest woman on earth, a saint if ever there was a saint. She's the one that's got to be protected. Not a breath of her name must come out. If it takes the last cent I've got and dad's got I want you to buy off that wife of mine. You warned me against marrying her, and I wish to God I'd listened to you. I'm not blaming her for being suspicious, but I can't let her smash Charity. I'll protect Charity if I have to build a wall of solid gold around her."

McNiven tried to quiet him. He saw no reason for alarm. "You don't have to urge me to protect Charity," he said. "She's an angel as well as my client. All you need is a little sleep. Go to bed and don't worry. Remember, there never was a storm so big that it didn't blow over."

"Yes, but what does it blow over before it blows over?" said Jim.

"You're talking in your sleep already. Good night," said McNiven.

CHAPTER IX

THE next morning McNiven found Charity at his office when he arrived. She had evidently been awake all night.

She told McNiven a story that agreed in the essentials with Jim's except that she made herself out the fool where he had blamed himself. McNiven had no success in trying to quiet her with soothing promises of a tame conclusion. She dreaded Kedzie.

"If it were just an outburst of jealousy," she said, "you might talk to the woman. But she's not jealous of her husband. She was as cool as a cucumber when she found us together. She was glad of it, because she had got a way to get her Marquess now. She's ambitious and Lady Macbeth couldn't outdo her."

She told McNiven what she had not had the heart to tell Jim about Strathdene. It worried him more than he admitted. While he meditated on a measure to meet this sort of attack, Charity suggested one. It was drastic, but she was desperate. She proposed the threat of a countercharge against Kedzie.

McNiven shook his head and made strange noises in his pipe. He asked for evidence against Kedzie. Charity could only quote the general opinion.

McNiven said: "No. You allege innocence on your part in spite of appearances which you admit are almost conclusive. You can hardly claim that more innocent appearances on her part prove that she is guilty. Besides, we don't want to stir up any more sediment. We'll do everything on the Q. T. Money talks, and the little lady

is not deaf. My legal advice to you is, 'Don't fret,' and my medical advice is, 'Go to bed and stay there till I send you word that it's all over.' Remember one thing, there never was a storm so big that it didn't blow over."

Charity was not in the least quieted. His sedative only annoyed her ragged nerves.

"Keep my name clean," she whispered.

As she rode home in a taxicab that was like a refrigerator she passed in the Fifth Avenue mêlée Zada L'Etoile, now Mrs. Cheever, with the tiny little Cheever like a princelet asleep at her breast, hiding with its pink head the letter "A" that had grown there.

People of cautious respectability spoke to Zada now with amiable respect, and murmured:

"Funny thing! She's made a man of that good-for-nothing Peter Cheever. They're as happy and as thick as thieves."

Charity had heard this saying, and she dreaded to realize that perhaps in a few days respectable people would be turning from herself, not seeing her, or storing up credit by snubbing her and muttering:

"No wonder poor Cheever couldn't get along with her. He took the blame like a gentleman, and now she's found out. She was a sly one, but you can't fool all the people all the time."

Charity had not been gone from McNiven's office long before a lawyer's clerk arrived bearing the papers for a divorce on statutory grounds in the case of Dyckman *versus* Dyckman, Mrs. Charity C. Cheever, co-respondent, Anson Beattie counsel for plaintiff.

McNiven went after Beattie at once and proposed a quiet treaty and a settlement out of court. Beattie grinned so odiously that McNiven had to say:

"Oh, I remember you. You used to be an ambulance-chaser. What are you after now—a little dirty advertising?"

"What are you after?" said Beattie. "A little collusive juggling with the Seventh Commandment?"

"The one against false witness is the Ninth," said McNiven. "But let's have a conference. This war in Europe might have been avoided by a little heart-to-heart talk beforehand. Let's profit by the lesson."

Beattie consented to this, and promised to arrange it on condition that in the mean while McNiven would accept service for his client. This was done, and Beattie left.

He saw his great publicity campaign being thwarted, and changed his mind. He hankered for fame more than gold. He filed the papers and meditated. He did not know how much or how little Kedzie loved her husband, and she had told him nothing of Strathdene. He feared that a compromise might be patched up and perhaps a reconciliation effected. He had had women come to him imploring a divorce from their abominable husbands only to see the couple link up again, kiss and make up, and call him an abominable villain for trying to part them.

After some earnest consideration of the right of his own career and his family to the full profit of this windfall, he looked up a reporter and through him a group of reporters and promised them a peep at something interesting.

He had the privilege of calling for the papers from the clerk of the court, so he took them out and permitted the reporters to glance within and make note of the contents.

Late editions of the evening papers gave the Dyckman divorce a fanfare rivaling the evidence that the Germans were about to resume their unrestricted submarine *Schrecklichkeit*.

If the spoken word is impossible to recall, how much more irretrievable the word that is printed in millions of newspapers. The name of Dyckman was a household word. It resounded now in every household throughout the country, and across the sea, where the name had become familiar in all the nations from the big financial dealings of the elder Dyckman as a banker for the Allies.

Reporters played about Jim Dyckman that night as if they were *banderilleros* and he a raging bull. He fought them with the same success.

They tried to find Charity, but she was in the doctor's care—actually. The doctor himself dismissed the reporters. He called them "ghouls," which did not sweeten their hearts toward his patient.

The next day there was probably not a morning paper in the United States in any language that failed to star the news that Mrs. Dyckman had found her husband's relations with Mrs. Cheever intolerable.

That morning saw the conference in McNiven's office, as promised by Beattie. But Kedzie did not appear; she had vanished to some place where she could not be found by anybody except the man who wrote her highly imaginative affidavits for her and the notary public who attested her signature.

At the conference with Jim, Kedzie was represented by counsel, also by father. Jim called the lawyer Beattie some hard old Anglo-Saxon names, and told him that if he were a little bigger he would give him the beating that was coming to him. Then he turned to Kedzie's father.

"Mr. Thropp," he pleaded, "you and I have always got along all right. You know I've tried to do the right thing by your daughter. I'm ready to now. She's too decent a girl to have done this thing on her own. This is the work of that rotten skunk of a lawyer—I apologize to the other skunks and the real lawyers. She has done a frightful injustice to the best woman on earth. She can never undo it, but surely she doesn't want to do any more. She's through with me, I suppose, but we ought to be able to clean up this affair respectably and quietly and not in the front show-window of all the damned newspapers in the world.

"Can't you and I make a little quiet gentleman's agreement to withdraw the charge and let the divorce go

through decently? I'll make any settlement on your daughter that she wants."

Adna pondered aloud, his claim-agent instincts alert: "Settlement, eh? What might you call settlement?"

"Whatever you'd consider fair. How much would you say was right?"

Adna filled his lungs and mouthed the deliciously liquid word as if it were a veritable *aurum potabile:*

"Millions!"

"What!" Jim gasped.

Adna fairly gargled it again:

"Millillions!"

The greed in the old man's eyes shot Dyckman's eyes with blood. He snarled:

"So it's the plain old blackmail, eh? Well, you can go plumb to hell!"

"All right," said Adna, felicitously, "but we won't go alone. I and daughter will have comp'ny. Come on, Mr. Beattie."

After they had gone Jim realized that his hatred of being gouged had involved Charity's priceless reputation. He told McNiven to recall Beattie, but Charity herself appeared in a new and militant humor.

The first realization that her good name was gone had crushed her. She had built it up like a mansion, adding a white stone day by day. When it fell about her in ruins her soul had swooned with the disaster.

After a night and a day of groveling terror she had recaptured the valor that makes and keeps a woman good, and she leaped from her sick bed and her sick soul into an armor of rage.

She burst in on McNiven and Jim and demanded a share in the battle. When Jim told her of his latest blunder she spoke up, stoutly:

"You did the right thing. To try to buy them off would be to confess guilt. The damage is done. The whole world has read the lie. Now we'll make it read the

truth. There must be some way for me to defend my name, and I want to know what it is."

McNiven told her that the law allowed her to enter the case and seek vindication, but he advised her against it. She thanked him for the information and rejected the advice. She was gray with battle-ardor and her very nostrils were fierce.

"I'm sorry to do anything to interfere with your welfare, Jim, for if I win she wins you; but you can get rid of her some other way. The little beast! She thinks she can make use of me as a bridge to cross over to her Marquess, but she can't!"

"Her Marquess?" Jim mumbled. "What does that mean?"

Charity regretted her impetuous speech, but McNiven explained it.

Jim was pretty well deadened to shocks by this time, but the news that his wife had been disloyal found an untouched spot in his heart to stab. It gave him a needed resentment, however, and a much-needed something to feel wronged about.

He caught a spark of Charity's blazing anger, and they resolved to fight the case to the limit. And that was where it took them.

CHAPTER X

ONCE the battle was joined, a fierce desire for haste impelled all of these people. Kedzie dreaded every hour's delay as a new risk of losing Strathdene, who was showing an increasing rage at having the name of his wife-to-be bandied about in the press, with her portraits in formal pose or snapped by batteries of reporters.

Her lawyer emphasized the heartbreak it was to her to learn that her adored husband had been led astray by her trusted friend. This did not make pleasant reading for the jealous Strathdene, and he wished himself jolly well out of the whole affair.

It was not long before his own name began to slip into the case by innuendo. Once he was in, he could not decently abandon his Kedzie, though he had to prove his devotion by denying it and threatening to shoot anybody who implied that his interest in Mrs. Dyckman was anything more than formal.

Jim Dyckman was impatient to have done with the suit, however it ended. He was tossed on both horns of the dilemma. He was compelled to fight one woman to save another. He could not defend Charity without striking Kedzie and he could not spare Kedzie without destroying Charity.

In a situation that would have overwhelmed the greatest tacticians he floundered miserably. He vowed that whatever the outcome of the case might be, he would never look at a woman again. Men find it very easy to condemn womankind *en bloc*, and they are forever forswearing the sex as if it were a unit or a bad habit.

During the necessary delay in reaching trial Jim asked and received an extension of his leave of absence; then his regiment came home from the Border and was mustered out of the Federal service and received again into the State control. Jim felt almost as much ashamed of involving his regiment in his scandal as Charity.

He had suffered so greatly from the embarrassment of the publicity that he could hardly endure to face his regiment and drill with his company. He offered his resignation again, but it was not accepted.

In fact, under the new condition of the National Guard service, his immediate officers had nothing to do with his resignation.

The probability of a call to arms, not against Mexico, but against the almost almighty German Empire, was so great that it looked like slackery or cowardice to ask to be excused. His next dread was that the regiment would be mustered in before the case was finished, compelling its postponement and leaving Charity to languish unrevenged.

For his inclusive anger at Everywoman soon changed back to deeper affection than ever. The first sight of her on the witness-stand at the mercy of the inquisition of the unscrupulous Beattie brought back all his old emotions for her and unnumbered new.

He had seen a picture of one of the Christian martyrs whose torture was inflicted on her by a man armed with steel pincers to pluck off her flesh from her shuddering soul bit by bit. It seemed to him that his sainted Charity was condemned to like atrocity. Her hands were bound by the thongs of the law, her body was stripped to the eyes of the crowd, and the tormentor went here and there, nipping at the quick with intolerable cruelty.

And Jim must not go to her rescue. He must not protest or lift a hand in her behalf. He must sit and suffer with her while the anguish squeezed the big sweat out of his knotted brows.

It had been hard enough to await the appearance of the

case on the docket, to sit through the selection of the jury, and to study the gradual recruitment of that squad of twelve sphinxes, all commonplace, yet mysterious, lacking in all divinity of comprehension and eager to be entertained with an exciting conflict.

The fact that a woman was the plaintiff was a tremendous handicap for Jim, even though a woman was allied with him in the defense. The very name "co-respondent" condemned her in advance in the public mind. And then she was rich and therefore dissipated in the minds of those who cannot imagine wealth as providing other fascinating businesses besides vice. And Jim was wealthy and therefore a proper object for punishment. If he had earned his millions it must have been by tyrannous corruption; if he had only inherited them that was worse yet.

Beattie lost no chance to play on the baser phases of the noble and essential suspicions of the democratic soul and also on Kedzie's humble origin, her child-like prettiness proving absolutely a child-like innocence and trust, and the homely simplicity of her parents, who, being poor and ignorant, were therefore inevitably virtuous and sincere.

Jim had realized from the first what a guilty aspect his unfortunate excursion with Charity must wear in the eyes of any one but her and him. Even the waiter who was on the ground had unwittingly conspired with their delicacy to put them in a most indelicate situation. Skip went on the stand, reveling in his first experience of fame, basking in the spot-light like a cheap actor, and acting very badly, yet well enough for the groundlings he amused.

Jim and Charity underwent a martyrdom of ridicule during his testimony. A man and woman riding backward on a mule through a jeering mob might seem pathetic enough if one had the heart to deny himself the laughter, but Jim and Charity made their grotesque pilgrimage without exciting sympathy.

Beattie had tried to get Mrs. Noxon on the stand to

confirm the proof that Charity had spent the night away, but the old lady showed her contempt of the court and of the submarines by sailing for Europe to escape the ordeal. The chauffeur, the valet, and the Viewcrest servants were enough, however, to corroborate Skip Magruder's story beyond any assailing, and handwriting experts had no difficulty in convincing the jury that Jim's signature on the hotel register was in his own handwriting. He had made no effort to disguise it or even to change his name till the last of it was well begun.

Mr. and Mrs. Thropp made splendid witnesses for their child and the old mother's tears melted a jury that had never seen her weep for meaner reasons.

When Charity reached the stand the case against her was so complete that all her bravery was gone. She felt herself a fool for having brought the ordeal on herself. She took not even self-respect with her to the chair of torture.

CHAPTER XI

IN the good old days of Hester Prynne they published a faithless wife by sewing a scarlet "A" upon the bosom of her dress. Nowadays the word is pronounced "co-respondent," and it may be affixed to any woman's name by any newspaper, or any plaintiff in a divorce case.

So fearful a power was so much abused that since 1911 in New York the co-respondent has been permitted to come into the court and oppose the label. It is in sort a revival of the ancient right to trial by ordeal. This hideous privilege of proving innocence by walking unshod over hot plowshares is most frigidly set forth in the statute where the lawyer's gift for putting terrible things in desiccated phrases was never better shown than in Section 1757.

In an action brought to obtain a divorce on the ground of adultery, the plaintiff or defendant may serve a copy of his pleading on the co-respondent named therein. At any time within twenty days after such service on said co-respondent he may appear to defend such action, so far as the issues affect such co-respondent. If no such service be made, then at any time before the entry of judgment any co-respondent named in any of the pleadings shall have the right, at any time before the entry of judgment, to appear either in person or by attorney in said action and demand of plaintiff's attorney a copy of the summons and complaint, which must be served within ten days thereafter, and he may appear to defend such action, so far as the issues affect such co-respondent. In case no one of the allegations of adultery controverted by such co-respondent shall be proved, such co-respondent shall be entitled to a bill of costs against the person naming him as such co-respondent, which bill of costs shall consist only of the sum now allowed by

law as a trial fee, and disbursements, and such co-respondent shall be entitled to have an execution issue for the collection of the same.

The exact amount of money was set forth in another place, in Section 3251, where it is stated that the sums obtainable are "for trial of an issue of fact, $30, and when the trial necessarily occupies more than two days, $10 in addition thereto."

In other words, Mrs. Charity Coe Cheever, finding her life of good works and pure deeds crowned with the infamy which Mrs. Kedzie Dyckman in her anger and her haste pressed on her brow, had the full permission of the law to come into the public court, face a vitriolic lawyer, and deny her guilt.

If she survived the trip through hell she could collect from her accuser forty dollars to pay her lawyer with. The priceless boon of such a vindication she could keep for herself. And that ended her.

This is only one of the numberless vicious and filthy and merciless consequences of the things done in the name of virtue by those who believe divorce to be so great an evil that they will commit every other evil in order to oppose it.

In no other realm of law and punishment has severity had more need of hypocrisy to justify itself than in the realm of wedlock. What grosser burlesque could there be than the conflict between the theory and the practice? The law and the Church, claiming what few people will deny, that marriage is an immensely solemn, even a sacred, condition, have made entrance into it as easy as possible and the escape from it as difficult. It is as if one were to say, "Revolvers are very dangerous weapons, therefore they shall be placed within the reach of infants, but they must on no account be taken away from them, and once grasped they must never be laid down."

The most stringent rules have been formulated to

prevent those people from marrying each other who are least likely to want to—namely, blood relations. But there is no law against total strangers meeting at the altar for the first time, and the marriage by proxy of people who have never seen each other has had the frequent blessing of ecclesiastic pomp.

At a time when legal divorce was too horrible to contemplate they made very pretty festivals of betrothing little children who could not understand the ceremony or even parrot the pledge. Who indeed can understand the pledge before its meaning is made clear by life?

And why should people be forced to make an eternal pledge whose keeping is beyond their power or prophecy and from which there is no release? What is it but a subornation of perjury?

Those who so blithely scatter flowers before bridal couples and old shoes after them are perfectly benevolent, of course, in their abhorrence of separating the twain if they begin to throw their old shoes at each other; for they are sincerely convinced that if people were permitted to do as they pleased, nothing on earth would please them but vice. And so those who have the lawmaking itch set about saving humanity from itself by making inhuman laws, which the clever and the criminal evade or break through, leaving the gentle and the timid in the net.

For there was never no divorce. No amount of law has ever availed to keep those together who had the courage or the cruelty to break the bonds. By hook or by crook, if not by book, they will be free.

The question of the children is often used to cloud the issue, as if all that children needed for their welfare were the formal alliance of their parents, and as if a home where hatred rages or complacent vice is serene were the ideal rearing-ground for the young. When love of their children is enough to keep two incompatible souls together there is no need of the law. When that love is insufficient what can the law accomplish? And what of the innumer-

able families where there have been no children, or where they are dead or grown-up?

The experiment of forbidding what cannot be prevented and of refusing legal sanction to what human nature demands has been given centuries of trial with no success.

Marriage is among the last of the institutions to have the daylight let in and the windows thrown open. For the home is no more threatened by liberty than the State is, and that pair which is kept together only by the shackles of the law is already divorced; its cohabitation is a scandal. Free love in the promiscuous sense is no uglier than coupled loathing. The social life of that community where divorce is least free is no purer than that where divorce is not difficult. Otherwise South Carolina, which alone of the States permits no divorce on any ground, should be an incomparable Eden of marital innocence. Is it? And New York, which has only one ground, and that the scriptural, should be the next most innocent. Is it?

Meanwhile the mismated of our day who are struggling through the transition period between the despotism of matrimony and its republic can be sure that the righteous will omit no abuse that they can inflict. Those who would free Russias must face Siberias.

The worst phase of it is that some of those who are determined to be free and cannot otherwise get free will not hesitate to destroy innocent persons who may be useful to their escape.

Mrs. Kedzie Dyckman had her heart set on releasing herself from the husband she had in order that she might try another who promised her more happiness, more love, and more prestige. The husband she had would have been willing enough to set her free, both because he liked to give her whatever she wanted and because he was not in love with their marriage himself.

But the law of New York State says that married

couples shall not uncouple amicably and intelligently. If they will part it must be with bitterness and laceration. One of the two must be driven out through the ugly gate of adultery. They must part as enemies and they must sacrifice some third person as a blood-offering on the altar.

It is a strange thing that the lamb, which is the symbol of innocence and harmlessness, should have always been the favorite for sacrifice.

Charity Coe had happened along at the convenient moment.

CHAPTER XII

"MRS. CHARITY COE CHEEVER, take the stand. . . ."

"Ju swear tell tru thole tru noth buth tru thelpugod?"

"I do."

McNiven, in the direct examination, asked only such questions as Charity easily answered with proud denials of guilt. Beattie began the cross-examination with a sneering scorn of her good faith.

"Mrs. Cheever, you are the co-respondent in this case of Dyckman *versus* Dyckman?"

"I am."

"And on this night you went motoring with defendant?"

"Yes."

"Was his wife with you?"

"No; you see—"

"Was any other person with you?"

"You see, it was a new car and it was only our intention to—"

"Was any other person with you?"

"No."

"And you spent the night with the defendant in the Viewcrest Inn?"

"That is hardly the way I should put it."

"Answer the question, please."

"I will not answer such an insulting question."

"I beg your pardon most humbly. Were you registered as the defendant's wife?"

McNiven's voice: "I 'bject. There is no evidence witness even saw the book."

The judge: "Objection s'tained."

"Well, then, Mrs. Cheever, did you see the defendant write in the book?"

"I—I—perhaps I did—"

"Perhaps you did. You heard the waiter Magruder testify here awhile ago that he insisted on defendant registering, and defendant reluctantly complied. Do you remember that?"

"I—I—I believe I do. But I didn't see what he wrote."

"You didn't see what he wrote. Exhibit A shows that he wrote '*Mr. and Mrs. James Dysart.*' You heard the handwriting experts testify that the writing was Dyckman's. But you did not see the writing. Did you not, however. hear the waiter speak of you as the defendant's wife?"

"Well—I may have heard him."

"You didn't tell him that you were not the defendant's wife?"

"I didn't speak to the waiter at all. It was a very embarrassing situation."

"It must have been. So you did not deny that you were the defendant's wife?"

"You see, it was like this. When Mr. Dyckman asked me to try his new car—"

"You did not deny that you were the defendant's wife?"

"I hadn't the faintest idea that we could have gone so far—"

"Answer the question!"

"But I'm coming to that—"

The judge: "Witness will answer question."

"But, your Honor, can't I explain? Has he a right to ask these horrible things in that horrible way?"

The lawyer: "We are trying to get at the horrible truth. But if you prefer not to answer I will not press the point. The waiter showed you to the parlor, saying that the rest of the hotel was occupied?"

"Yes."

"He left you there together, you and the defendant?"

"Well, he went away, but—"

"And left you together. He so testified. He also testified that he found you together the next morning. Is that true?"

"Oh, that's outrageous. I refuse to answer."

Jim Dyckman rose from his chair in a frenzy of wrath. His lawyer, McNiven, pressed him back and pleaded with him in a whisper to remember the court. He yielded helplessly, cursing himself for his disgraceful lack of chivalry.

The judge spoke sternly. "Witness will answer questions of counsel or—"

"But, your Honor, he is trying to make me say that I—Oh, it's loathsome. I didn't. I didn't. He has no right!"

When a woman's hair is caught in a traveling belt and she is drawn backward, screaming, into the wheels of a great machinery that will mangle her beauty if it does not helplessly murder her there are not many people whose hearts are hard enough to withhold pity until they learn whether or not her plight was due to carelessness.

There are always a few, however, who will add their blame to her burden, and they usually invoke the name of justice for their lethargy of spirit.

Yet even the cruelty of that severity is a form of self-protection against a shattering grief; and a perfect heart would have pity even for the pitiless, since they, too, are the victims of their own carelessness; they, too, are drawn backward into the soul-crushing cogs of the world.

Mrs. Charity Coe Cheever, as good a woman as ever was, was being dragged to the meeting-point of great wheels, but she had turned about and was fighting to escape, at least with what was dearer than her life. The pain and the terror were supreme, and even if she wrenched free from destruction it would be at the cost of lasting scars. Yet she fought.

It had been all too easy for the infuriated Kedzie Dyckman to entangle Charity in the machinery. Kedzie was a little terrified at the consequences of her own act, though she would have said that she did it in self-defense and to punish an outrage upon her rights. But when persons set out to punish other persons, it is not often that their own hands are altogether innocent.

If the Christly edict, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone," had been followed out there would never have been another stone cast. And one might ask if the world would have been, or could have been, the worse for that abstention. For, whatever else may be true, the venerable practices of justice have been false and futile.

And now, nearly two thousand years later, after two thousand years more of heartbreaking history, an increasing few are asking bitterly if punishment has ever paid.

Vaguely imagining on one side the infinite misery and ugliness of the dungeons and tortures, the disgraces and executions of the ages with their counter-punishment on the inquisitors and the executioners, and setting against them that uninterrupted stream of deeds we call crimes, what is the picture but a ghastly vanity—an eternal process of trying to dam the floods of old Nile by flinging in forever poor wretch after poor wretch to drown unredeemed and unavailing?

Charity was the latest sacrifice. If she had been guilty of loving too wildly well, or of drifting unconsciously into a situation where opportunity made temptation irresistible, there would be a certain reaction to pity after she had been definitely condemned. There are at times advantages in weakness, as women well know, though Charity despised them now.

Kedzie's lawyer, however, felt it good tactics to assume now the pose of benevolent patience with an erring one. Seeing that Charity was in danger of stirring the hearts of the jurors by her suffering, he forestalled their sympathy and murmured:

"I will wait till Mrs. Cheever has regained control of herself."

Instantly Charity's pride quickened in her. She wanted none of that beast's pity. She responded to the strange sense of discipline before fate that makes a man walk soldierly to the electric chair; inspires a caught spy to stand placidly before his own coffin and face the firing-squad; led Joan of Arc after one panic of terror to wait serene among the crackling fagots.

The lawyer was relieved. He had been afraid that Charity would weep. He resumed the probe:

"And now, Mrs. Cheever, if you are quite calm I will proceed. I regret the necessity of asking these questions, but you were not compelled to come into court. You came of your own volition, did you not?"

"Yes."

"Witnesses have testified and you have not denied that you arrived at the Viewcrest Inn late at night; that you saw the defendant register; that you and he went to the only room left; that the waiter left you together and found you together the next morning. You have heard that testimony, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Knowing all this, do you still claim that your conduct was above reproach?"

"For discretion, no. I was foolish and indiscreet."

"And that was all?"

"Yes."

"You are innocent of the charge, then?"

"Yes."

"Do you ask the jury to believe you?"

"I ask them to—yes! Yes! I ask them to."

"Do you expect them to?"

"Oh, they ought to."

"If you had been guilty of misconduct would you admit it?"

"Yes."

"Do you expect them to believe that?"

"If they knew me they would."

"Well, we haven't all the privilege of knowing you as well as the defendant does. You may step down, Mrs. Cheever, thank you."

McNiven rose. "One moment, Mrs. Cheever. You testified on direct examination that the defendant left you immediately after the waiter did?"

"Yes."

"And that he did not return till the next morning, just before the waiter returned."

"Yes."

"That is all, Mrs. Cheever."

McNiven would have done better to leave things alone. The sturdy last answer of Charity and the unsportsmanlike sneer of Kedzie's lawyer had inclined the jury her way. McNiven's explanation awoke again the skeptic spirit.

Charity descended from her pillory with a feeling that she had said none of the things she had planned to say. The eloquence of her thoughts had seemed incompatible somehow with the witness-stand. At a time when she needed to say so much she had said so little and all of it wrong.

CHAPTER XIII

JIM DYCKMAN'S heart was so wrung with pity for Charity when she stepped down and sought her place in a haze of despair that he resolved to make a fight for her himself. He insisted on McNiven's calling him to the stand, though McNiven begged him to let ill enough alone.

He took the oath with a fierce enthusiasm that woke the jury a little, and he answered his own lawyer's questions with a fervor that stirred a hope in the jury's heart, a sorely wrung heart it was, for its pity for Charity was at war with its pity for Kedzie, and its admiration for Jim Dyckman, who was plainly a gentleman and a good sport even if he had gone wrong, could only express itself by punishing Kedzie, whose large eyes and sweet mouth the jury could not ignore or resist.

When his own lawyer had elicited from Jim the story as he wanted it told, which chanced to be the truth, McNiven abandoned him to Beattie with the words:

"Your witness."

Beattie was in fine fettle. He had become a name talked about transcontinentally and now he was crossing swords with the famous Dyckman. And Dyckman was at a hideous disadvantage. He could only parry, he could not counter-thrust. There was hardly a trick forbidden to the cross-examiner and hardly a defense permitted to the witness.

And yet that very helplessness gave the witness a certain shadowy aide at his side.

Jim's heart was beating high with his fervor to defend

Charity, but it stumbled when Beattie rose and faced him. And Beattie faced him a long while before he spoke.

A slow smile crept over the lawyer's mien as he made an excuse for silence out of the important task of scrubbing his eye-glasses.

Before that alkaline grin Jim felt his faith in himself wavering. He remembered unworthy thoughts he had entertained, graceless things he had done; he felt that his presence here as a knight of unassailable purity was hypocritical. He winced at all points from the uncertainty as to the point to be attacked. His life was like a long frontier and his enemy was mobilized for a sudden offensive. He would know the point selected for the assault when he felt the assault. The first gun was that popular device, a supposititious question.

"Mr. Dyckman, you are accused of—well, we'll say co-respondence with the co-respondent. You have denied your guilt in sundry affidavits and on the witness-stand here. Remembering the classic and royal ideal of the man who 'perjured himself like a gentleman,' and assuming—I say 'assuming' what you deny—that you had been guilty, would you have admitted it?"

"I could not have been guilty."

"Could not? Really! you astonish me! And why not, please?"

"Because Mrs. Cheever would never have consented. She is a good woman."

This unexpected answer to the old trick question jolted Beattie perceptibly and brought the jury forward a little. The tears gushed to Charity's eyes and she felt herself unworthy a champion so pious.

Beattie acknowledged the jolt with a wry smile and returned:

"Very gallant, Mr. Dyckman; you want to be a gentleman and avoid the perjury, too. But I must ask you to answer the question. Suppose you had been guilty."

Silence.

"Answer the question!"

Silence.

"Will his Honor kindly instruct the witness to answer the question?"

Jim broke in, "His Honor cannot compel me to suppose something that is impossible."

The jury rejoiced unwillingly, like the crowd in the bleachers when a man on the opposing team knocks a home run. The jury liked Jim better. But what they liked, after all, was what they falsely imagined. They assumed that Jim had been out on a lark and got caught and was putting up a good scrap for his lady friend. He was a hum-dinger, and no wonder the lady fell for him. Into such slang their souls translated the holiness of his emotions, and they voted him guilty even in awarding him their admiration for his defense.

Beattie paused again, then suddenly asked, "Mr. Dyckman, how long have you loved Mrs. Cheever?"

"What do you mean by 'loved'?"

"It is a familiar word. Answer the question."

"I have admired Mrs. Cheever since she was a child. We have always been friends."

"Your 'friendship' was considerably excited when she married Mr. Cheever, wasn't it?"

"I—I thought he was unworthy of her."

"Was that why you beat him up in a fist fight at your club?"

This startled the entire court. Even reporters who had missed the news were excited. McNiven sprang to his feet, crying:

"I 'bject! There is no evidence before the court that there ever was such a fight. The question is incompir-relvimmaterial."

"S'tained!" said the judge.

Beattie was satisfied. The arrow had been pulled out, but its poison remained. He made use of another of his tantalizing pauses, then:

"It was shortly afterward that Mrs. Cheever divorced her husband, was it not?"

"I 'bject," McNiven barked.

"S'tained!" the judge growled.

"Let us get back to the night when you and Mrs. Cheever went a-motoring." Beattie smiled. "There was a beautiful moon on that occasion, I believe."

The jury grinned. The word "moon" meant foolishness. Beattie took Jim through the story of that ride and that sojourn at the tavern, and every question he asked condemned Jim to a choice of answers, either alternative making him out ridiculously virtuous or criminal.

Beattie rehearsed the undenied facts, but substituted for the glamour of innocence in bad luck the sickly glare of cynicism. He asked Jim if he had ever heard of the expression, "The time, the place, and the girl." He had the jury snickering at the thought of a big rich youth like Jim being such a ninny, such a milksop and mollycoddle, as to defy an opportunity so perfect.

The public mind has its dirt as well as its grandeurs; the pool that mirrors the sky is easily roiled and muddied. It was possible for the same people to abhor Jim and Charity for being guilty and to feel that if they were not guilty with such an occasion they were still more contemptible.

Thus ridicule, which shakes down the ancient wrongs and the tyrants' pretenses, shakes down also the ancient virtues and the struggling ideals.

Finally Beattie said, "You say you left the fair co-respondent alone in the hotel parlor?"

"I did."

"All alone?"

"Yes."

"And you went out into the night, as the saying is?"

"Yes."

"But you testified that it was raining."

"It was."

"You went out into the rain?"

"Yes."

"To cool your fevered brow?"

Silence from Jim; shrieks of laughter from the silly spectators. The jury was shattered with amusement; the judge wiped a grin from his lips. Beattie resumed:

"Where did you sleep?"

"In the office chair."

"You paid for the parlor! You registered! And you slept in the chair!" [Gales of laughter. His Honor threatens to clear the court.] "Who saw you asleep in the chair?"

"I don't know—I was asleep."

"Are you sure that you did not just dream about the chair?"

"I am sure."

"That's all."

Jim stepped down, feeling idiotic.

There is a dignity that survives and is illumined by flames of martyrdom, but there is no dignity that is improved by a bladder-buffeting. Jim slunk back to his place and cowered, while the attorneys made their harangues.

McNiven spoke with passion and he had the truth on his side, but it lacked the convincing look. Beattie rocked the jury-box with laughter and showed a gift for parodying seriousness that would carry him far on his career. Then he switched to an ardent defense of the purity of the American home, and ennobled the jury to a knighthood of chivalry and of democracy. As he pointed out, the well-known vices of the rich make every household unsafe unless they are sternly checked by the dread hand of the law.

He called upon the jury to inflict on the Lothario a verdict that would not only insure comfort to the poor little woman whose home had been destroyed, but would also be severe enough to make even a multimillionaire realize and

remember that the despoiler of the American home cannot continue on his nefarious path with impunity.

The judge gave a long and solemn charge to the jury. It was fair according to the law and the evidence, but the evidence had been juggled by the fates.

The jury retired and remained a hideous while.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was only a pleasant clubby discussion of the problem of Jim's and Charity's innocence that delayed the jury's verdict. One or two of the twelve had a sneaking suspicion that they had told the truth, but these were laughed out of their wits by the wiser majority who were not such fools as to believe in fairy-stories.

As one of the ten put it: "That Dyckman guy may have gone out into the rain, but, believe me, he knew enough to come in out of the wet."

A very benevolent old gentleman who sympathized with everybody concerned made a little speech:

"It seems to me, gentlemen, that when a man and wife have quarreled as bitterly as those two and have taken their troubles to court, there is no use trying to force them together again. If we give a verdict of not guilty, that will leave Mr. and Mrs. Dyckman married. But they must hate each other by now and that would mean life-long misery and sin for both. So I think we will save valuable time and satisfy everybody best by giving a verdict of guilty. It won't hurt Dyckman any."

"What about Mrs. Cheever?"

"Oh, she's gotta lotta money."

None of the jury had ever had so much as that and it was equivalent to a good time and the answer to all prayers, so they did not fret about Charity's future. On the first ballot, after a proper reminiscence of the amusing incidents of the trial they proceeded to a decision. The verdict was unanimous that Jim was guilty as charged. Charity was not to get her forty dollars nor her good name.

When the jurors filed back into the box the court came to attention and listened to the verdict.

Jim and Charity were dazed as if some footpad had struck them over the head with a slingshot. Kedzie was hysterical with relief. She had suffered, too, throughout the trial. And now she had been vindicated.

She went to the jury and she shook hands with each member and thanked him.

"You know I accept the verdict as just one big beautiful birthday present." It was not her birthday, but it sounded well, and she added, "I shall always remember your kindly faces. Never can I forget one of you."

Two days later she met one of the unforgetable jurors on the street and did not recognize him. He had been one-twelfth of her knightly champions, but she cut him dead as an impertinent stranger when he tried to speak to her. She cut Skip Magruder still deader when he tried to ride home with her.

He came to call and showed an inclination to settle down as a member of Kedzie's intimate circle. He had speedily recovered from his first awe at the sight of her splendor. Finding himself necessary to her, he grew odiously presumptuous. She had not dared to rebuke him. Now she thought she would have to buy him off. Skip had had his witness fees and his expenses, and nothing else for his pains. Then Beattie warned Kedzie that it would look bad to pay Skip any money; it might cast suspicion on his testimony. Kedzie would not have done that for worlds. Besides, when she learned what Mr. Beattie's fee was to be, she felt too poor to pay anybody anything.

The only thing she could do, therefore, was to remind Skip of the beautiful old song, "Lovers once, but strangers now."

"Besides, Skippie dear, I'm engaged."

"Already?"

"Yes."

"You woiked that excuse on me when you tried to

explain why you toined me down when I wrote you the letter at the stage door."

"Yes, I did."

"Say, Anitar, you'd oughter git some new material. Your act is growin' familiar."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh no! You wasn't never in vawdvul, was you, oh, no! not a tall!" Kedzie played her pout on him, but Skip glared at her, shook his head, kicked himself with his game leg, and said, "I gotta give you credit, Anitar, you're the real thing as a user."

"A what?" said Kedzie.

"A user," he explained in his elliptical style. "You're one them dames uses a fella like he was a napkin, then trows him down. You used me twice and used me good. I desoived the second one, for I'm the kind o' guy gets his once and comes back for more in the same place. I'd go tell Jimmie Dyckman I was a liar but I ain't anxious to be run up for poijury, and I ain't achin' to advertise what a John I been. So long, Anitar, and Gaw delp the next guy crosses your pat'."

That was the last Kedzie saw of Skip. She did not miss him. She hated him for annoying her pride and she hated the law that she used for her divorce, because it required her to wait three months before the interlocutory decree should become final. The time was hazardously long yet short, in a sense, for her alimony was to end at the end of three months if she married again, and marrying again was her next ambition. The judge had fixed her alimony at $30,000 a year, and an allowance for costs. Beattie tried to make a huge cost settlement, but McNiven knew of Kedzie's interest in the Marquess and he refused the bait. So Kedzie got only $7,500. She found it a ruinously small capital to begin life as a Marchioness on—she that had had only two dollars to begin life in New York on! The Marquess was very nice about it, and said he didn't want any of Dyckman's dirty money. But Ked-

zie thought of life in England with alarm, especially as she had the American comic-opera idea that all foreign peers are penniless. She dreaded to think what might happen in that three months' interregnum between husband II and husband III. Enough was happening in the rest of the world.

The *annus miserabilis* 1917 had begun with the determination of the German Empire to render the seas impassable and to withdraw the pledge to President Wilson that merchant ships should not be sunk till the passengers and crew had a chance to get into open boats. On January 31, 1917, "Frightfulness" began anew, and the undersea fleets, enormously increased, were set loose in shoals. Having no commerce of her own afloat, it was safe for Germany to sink any vessel anywhere.

Kedzie began to wonder if she would ever dare to sail for her future ancestral home, and if she did how long her ship would last.

On February 3d the U-53, which had sunk Strathdene's ship off Newport, sank an American freighter bound from Galveston to Liverpool. Other American vessels followed her into the depths. On February 27th the *Laconia*, of 18,000 tons burden, was torpedoed and twelve passengers died of exposure in the bitter weather. In one of the open boats a Catholic priest administered the last rites to seven persons.

Mrs. Hoy, of Chicago, died in the arms of her daughter and her body slipped into the icy waves, to be followed by her daughter's a few minutes later.

These seemed to make up a sufficient total of American women drowned, and on the next day the President declared that the long-awaited "overt act" had been committed. He asked Congress to declare that peace with Germany was ended. Her ambassador was sent home and ours called home.

In March the British captured Bagdad and the Germans suddenly retreated along a sixty-mile front in

France; then the Russian revolution abruptly changed the almighty Czar into a weeping prisoner digging snow. And the vast burying-ground of Siberia gave up its living dead in a sudden apocalypse of freedom. Fifty thousand sledges sped across the steppes laden with returning exiles, chains still dangling at many a wrist from the dearth of blacksmiths to strike them off.

Kedzie did not value the privilege of living in times when epochs of history were crowded into weeks and cycles completed in days. The revolution in Russia disturbed Kedzie as it did many a monarch, and she said to her mother:

"What a shame to treat the poor Czar so badly! Strathie and I were planning to visit Russia after the war, too. The Czar was awfully nice to Strathie once and I was sure we'd be invited to live right in the Duma or the Kremlin or whatever they call the palace. And now they've got a cheap and nasty old republic over there! And they're talking of having republics everywhere. What could be more stupid? As if everybody was born free and equal. Mixing all the aristocrats right up with the common herd!"

Mrs. Thropp agreed that it was simply turrible.

"Do you know what?" Kedzie gasped.

"What?" her mother echoed.

"I've just had a hunch. I'll bet that by the time I get married to Strathie there'll be nothing left but republics, and no titles at tall. His people came over with Henry the Conqueror and his title will last just long enough for me to reach for it, and then—woof! Wouldn't it be just my luck to become plain Mrs. Strathdene after all I've had to go through! Honestly, m'mah, don't I just have the dog-on'dest luck!"

"It's perfectly awful," said Mrs. Thropp, "but bad luck can't go on forever."

On April 2d the future Mrs. Strathdene was cheered by an extraordinary spectacle — newspapers in the Metro-

politan Opera House! Kedzie was there with her waning Marquess. The occasion was rare enough in itself, for an American opera was being heard: "The Canterbury Pilgrims," with Mr. Reginald De Koven's music to Mr. Percy Mackaye's text.

Suddenly, in the *entr'acte* the unheard-of thing—the newspapers—appeared in the boxes and about the house! People spread evening extras on the rails and read excitedly that President Wilson had gone to Congress and asked it to declare that a state of war existed and had existed.

The Italian manager directed the Polish conductor to play "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the three thousand men and women of the audience made a chorus on the obverse side of the curtain.

Mr. Gerard, lately returned from Germany, called for "Three cheers for President Wilson," and there were loud huzzahs for him and for the Allies.

"You and I are allies now," Kedzie murmured to the Marquess. She thought a trifle better of her country.

The Austrian prima donna fainted and could not appear in the last act, and everybody went home expecting to see the vigor of Uncle Sam displayed in a swift and tremendous delivery of a blow long, long withheld.

The vigor was displayed in a tremendous delivery of words far better withheld.

It was a week before Congress agreed that war existed and over a month passed before Congress agreed upon the nature of the army to be raised. Nearly four months passed before the draft was made.

Jim Dyckman was almost glad of the delay, for it gave him hope of settling his spiritual affairs in time to be a soldier. He was determined to marry Charity as soon as the three months' probation term was over. But Charity said no! Cowering in seclusion from the eyes of her world, she cherished a dream that when the war broke and the dead began to topple and the wounded to bleed, she might expiate the crime she had not committed, by devoting to

her own people her practised mercies. She was afraid to offer them now, or even to make her appearance among the multitudinous associations that sprang up everywhere in a frantic effort to make America ready in two weeks for a war that had been inevitable for two years. Not only a war was to be fought, but a world famine.

Charity was ashamed to show her white face even at the Red Cross. She busied herself with writing checks for the snow-storm of appeals that choked her mail. Otherwise she pined in idleness, refusing more than ever the devotion that Jim offered her now in a longing that increased with denial.

She suffered infinitely, yet mocked her own sufferings as petty trifles. She contrasted them with what the millions on millions of Europe's men were enduring as they huddled in the snow-drenched, grenade-spattered trenches, or agonized in all their wounds out in the No-Man's Land between the trenches. She told herself that her own heartaches were negligible, despicable against the innumerable anguishes of the women who saw their men, their old men, their young men, their lads, going into the eternal mills of the war, while hunger and loneliness and toil unknown to women before made up their daily portion.

She accused herself for still remaining apart from that continental sisterhood of grief. All America seemed to be playing Hamlet, debating, deferring, letting irresolution inhibit every necessary duty.

Since her country had disowned her and refused her justice or chivalry, she was tempted to disown her country and claim citizenship among those who could fight and could sacrifice and could endure.

It was not easy to persuade a captain to take a woman passenger aboard his ship, now that the German ambition was to sink a million tons a month, but she resolved again to go if she had to stowaway.

First she would finish her affairs, make her will, and burn

her letters. She had neglected to change the testament she had signed when she became Peter Cheever's wife, and took a pride in making him her sole heir. It would be ridiculous to make him such a post-mortem gift now, now that he had not only money enough, but a wife that satisfied him, and a child.

She wondered whom to leave her money to. Jim Dyckman's name kept recurring to her and she smiled at that, for he had more money than he could use. Besides, the mention of his name in her will would confirm the public belief in their intrigue. She had nobody to inflict her inheritance upon but a few relatives, mostly rich enough. She decided to establish a fund for her own orphans, the children of other women whom she had adopted.

Making a will is in sort a preliminary death. Making hers, Charity felt herself already gone, and looked back at life with a finality as from beyond the grave. It was a frightful thing to review her journey from a lofty angel's-eye view.

Her existence looked very petty. Now that her hope and her senses were ended, she felt a grudge against the world that she had got so little out of. She had tried to be a good woman, and her altruism had won her such a bad name that if Dr. Mosely should preach her funeral sermon he would feel that he had revealed a wonderful spirit of forbearance in leaving it unmentioned that she was an abandoned divorcée.

If she had been actually guilty of an intrigue with Jim Dyckman Dr. Mosely would have forgiven her even more warmly, because it was a woman taken in actual adultery who was forgiven, while Charity had tactlessly fought the charge and demanded vindication instead of winsomely appealing for pity.

By a roundabout road of self-surrender she had come to the same destination that she might have reached by the straight path of self-indulgence. She was perilously near to resolving that she had been a fool not to have taken hap-

piness, physical happiness, first. A grand red passion seemed so much more beautiful than a petty blue asceticism.

When she got home from the will-making session with McNiven she began to go over her papers and close the books of her years. She attacked old heaps of bundles of her husband's letters and telegrams, and burned them with difficulty in her fireplace.

She felt no temptation to glance over them, though her lip curled in a grimace of sardonic disgust to consider how much Peter Cheever had been to her and how little he was to her now. The first parcels she burned were addressed to "Miss Charity Coe." How far off it seemed since she had been called "Miss"!

She had been a girl when Cheever's written and spoken words inflamed her. They blazed now as she had blazed. Into that holocaust had gone her youth, her illusions, her virginity, her bridehood, her wifely trust. And all that was left was a black char.

She came upon letters from Jim Dyckman, also, a few. She flung them into the fire with the rest. He had had nothing from her except friendship and girlish romance and a grass-widow's belated affection. Crimson thoughts stole through her dark heart like the lithe blazes interlacing the letters; she wondered if she would have done better to have followed desire and taken love instead of solitude.

She knew that she could have made Jim hers long ago with a little less severity, a less harsh rebuff. The Church condemned her for openly divorcing her husband. She might have kept him on the leash and carried on the affair with Jim that Cheever accused her of if Jim had been complacent and stealthy. Or, she might have kept Jim at her heels till she was rid of Cheever and then have married him. She would have saved him at least from floundering through the marsh where that Kedzie-o'-the-wisp had led him to ultimate disaster.

And now that she had taken stock of her past and put it into the fire, she felt strangely exiled. She had no past, no present, and a future all hazy. Her loneliness was complete. She had to talk to some one, and she telephoned to Jim Dyckman, making her good-bys an excuse.

It was the first time he had been permitted to hear her voice for weeks, and the lonely joy that cried out in his greeting brought warm tears to her dull, dry eyes.

He heard her weeping and he demanded the right to come to see her. She refused him and cut off his plea, hoping that he would come, anyway, and waiting tremulously till the door-bell rang with a forgotten thrill of a caller, a lover calling.

Her maid, who brought her Jim's name, begged with her eyes that he should not be turned away again. Charity nodded and prinked a little and went down-stairs into Jim's arms.

He took her there as if she belonged there and she felt that she did, though she protested, feebly:

"You are not unmarried yet."

They were in that No-Man's-Land. She was neither maid, wife, nor widow, but divorcée. He was neither bachelor, husband, nor widower; he was not even a divorcé. He was a *Nisi Prius*.

CHAPTER XV

THE childish old fates played one of their cheapest jokes on Jim Dyckman when, after they had dangled Charity Coe just out of his reach for a lifetime, they flung her at his head. They do those things. They waken the Juliets just a moment too late to save the Romeos and themselves.

Jim had revered Charity as far too good for him, and now everybody wondered if he would do the right thing by her. Prissy Atterbury in a burst of chivalry said it when he said:

"Jim's no gentleman if he doesn't marry Charity."

Pet put it in a more womanly way:

"Unless he's mighty spry she'll nab him. Trust her!"

Among the few people who had caught a glimpse of Charity, no one had been quite cruel enough to say those things to her face, but Charity imagined them. Housed with her sick and terrified imagination for companion, she had imagined nearly everything dismal.

And now, when, by the mere laws of gravitation, she had floated into Jim Dyckman's arms for a moment, she heard the popular doom of them both in the joke he attempted:

"Charity, I've got to marry you to make you an honest woman."

She wrenched free of his embrace with a violence that staggered him. He saw that she was taking his effort at playfulness seriously, even tragically.

"No, no, Jim!" she gasped. "I've brought you enough trouble and enough disgrace. I won't let you ruin your life by marrying me out of pity."

"Pity! Good God!" Jim groaned. "Why, you don't think I meant that, do you? I was just trying to be funny, because I was so happy. I'll promise never to try to be funny again. It was like saying to Venus, 'You're a homely old thing, but I'll let you cook for me'; or saying to — whoever it was was the Goddess of Wisdom, 'You don't know much, but'— Why, Charity Coe, you're Venus and Minerva and all the goddesses rolled into one."

Charity shook her head.

He roared: "If it's pity you're talking about, isn't it about time you had a little for me? Life won't be worth a single continental damn to me if I don't get you."

Charity had needed something of this sort for a long time. It sounded to her like a serenade by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Her acknowledgment was a tearful, smileful giggle-sob:

"Honestly?"

"Honest-to-God-ly!"

"All right, as soon as you're a free man fetch the parson, for I'm pretty tired of being a free woman."

Jim had learned from McNiven that a part of his freedom, when he got it, would be a judicial denial of the right to surrender it for five years. He had learned that if he wanted to marry Charity he must persuade her over into New Jersey. It did not please Jim to have to follow the example of Zada and Cheever, and it hit him as a peculiar cruelty that he and Charity had to accept not only an unearned increment of scandal in the verdict of divorce, but also a marriage contrary to the laws of New York.

New York would respect the ceremonies of New Jersey, but there would be a shadow on the title. Still, such marriages were recognized by the public with little question, just as in the countries where divorce is almost or quite impossible society of all grades has always countenanced unions not too lightly entered into or continued. In such

countries words like "mistress," "concubine," and "morganatic wife" take on a decided respectability with a touch of pathos rather than reproach.

Jim had come to beg Charity to accept a marriage with an impediment. He had expected a scene when he proposed a flight across the river and a return to Father Knickerbocker with a request for pardon. But her light suggestion of a religious ceremony threw him into confusion. He mumbled:

"Is a parson absolutely necessary?"

Charity's lips set into a grim line.

"I'll be married by a parson or I'll not be married at all. The Church has enough against me on account of my divorce and this last ghastly thing. To get married outside the Church would cut me off entirely from everything that's sacred. There won't be any difficulty about getting a parson, will there?"

"Oh no, not at all!" Jim protested, "only—oh no, not at all, except—"

"Only what? Except what?"

"You'll have to go to New Jersey to be married."

"Why should I?"

"Entirely on my account, honey. It's because I'm in disgrace."

This way of putting it brought her over that sill with a rush. To be able to endure something for him was a precious ability. She hugged him devoutly, then put his arms away.

When he left her he had a brilliant inspiration. He thought how soothing it would be to her bruised heart, what carron-oil to her blistered reputation, if he got Doctor Mosely to perform the ceremony.

Jim was so delighted with the stroke of genius that he went immediately to the pastor's house. The dear old man greeted him with a subdued warmth.

"This is an unusual privilege, dear boy. I haven't seen you for—oh, ever so long. Of course, I have read

of you—er—that is—what—to what am I indebted for—"

"You perform marriages, don't you?"

"That is one of my perilous prerogatives. But, of course, I can't guarantee how well my marriages will wear in these restless times."

Jim braved a flippancy: "Then, being an honest dealer, you replace any damaged article, of course?"

"I am afraid I could hardly go so far as that."

"Could you go as far as New Jersey?"

"In my time I have ventured into Macedonia. But why do you ask?"

"You see, in a day or two, I'll be free from my present—that is, my absent wife; and I wanted to know if you could come over and marry me."

"But I thought—I fear—do you mean to say you are marrying some young woman from over there?"

"I'm marrying Charity Coe."

"My dear, dear boy! Really! You can't, you know! She has been divorced and so have you."

"Yes, all quite legally."

"And you ask me to join your hands in holy matrimony?"

"No, just plain legal matrimony. I was joined in holy matrimony once, and I don't insist on that part of it again. But Charity wants a clergyman and I don't mind."

"Really, my son, you know better than to assume this tone to me. You've been away from church too long."

"Well, if you want to get me back, fasten me to Charity. You know she's the best woman that ever lived."

"She is a trifle too rebellious to merit that tribute, I fear."

"Well, give her another chance. She has had enough hard knocks. You ought to go to her rescue."

"Do you think that to be the duty of the Church?"

"It used to be, didn't it? But don't get me into theol-

ogy. I can't swim. The point is, will you marry Charity to me?"

"No!"

"Wouldn't you marry her to any man?"

"Only to one."

"Who's that?"

"Her former husband."

"But he's married to another woman."

"I do not recognize that marriage."

"Good Lord!. Would you like to see Charity married to Cheever again?"

"Yes."

"To Peter Cheever?"

"Yes."

"Whew! Say, Doctor, that's going it pretty strong."

"I do not care to discuss the sacraments with you in your present humor."

"Did you read the trial of that woman last week who killed her husband and was acquitted? Mrs. What's-her-name? You must have read it."

"I pay little attention to the newspaper scandals."

"You ought to—they're what make life what it is. Anyway, this woman had a husband who turned out bad. He was a grafter and a gambler, a drunkard and a brute. He beat her and their five children horribly, and finally she divorced him. The law gave her her freedom in five minutes and there was no fuss about it, because she was poor, and the newspapers have no room for poor folks' marriage troubles—unless they up and kill somebody.

"Well, this woman was getting along all right when some good religious people got at her about the sin of her divorce and the broken sacrament, and they kept at her till finally she consented to remarry her husband—for the children's sake! There was great rejoicing by everybody—except the poor woman. After the remarriage he returned to his old ways and began to beat her again, and finally she emptied a revolver into him."

"Horrible, horrible!"

"Wasn't it? The jury disagreed on the first trial. But on the second the churchpeople who persuaded her to remarry him went on the stand and confessed—or perhaps you would say, boasted—that they persuaded her to remarry him. And then she was acquitted. And that's why the civil law has always had to protect people from—"

Doctor Mosely turned purple at the implication and the insolence. He scolded Jim loftily, but Jim did not cower. He was upheld by his own religion, which was Charity Coe's right to vindication and happiness.

At length he realized that he was harming Charity and not Doctor Mosely. Suddenly he was apologizing humbly:

"I'm very much ashamed of myself. You're an older man and venerable, and I—I oughtn't to have forgotten that."

"You ought not."

"I'll do any penance you say, if you'll only marry Charity and me."

"Don't speak of that again."

He thought of his old friend and attorney, money. He put that forward.

"I'll pay anything."

"Mr. Dyckman!"

"I'll give the church a solid gold reredos or contribute any sum to any alms—"

"Please go. I cannot tolerate any more."

Jim left the old man in such agitation that a reporter named Hallard, who shadowed him, feeling in his journalistic bones that a big story would break about him soon, noted his condition and called on Doctor Mosely. He was still shaken with the storm of defending his ideals from profanation, and Hallard easily drew from him an admission that Mr. Dyckman was bent upon matrimony, also a scathing diatribe on the remarriage of divorced persons as one of the signs of the increasing degeneracy of public morals.

Hallard's paper carried a lovely exclusive story the next morning in noisy head-lines. The other newspapers enviously plagiarized it and set their news-sleuths on Jim's trail. The clergy of all denominations took up the matter as a theme of vital timeliness.

Jim and Charity were beautifully suited to the purposes of both sorts; the newspapers that pulpiteered the news and wrote highly moral editorials for sensation's sake; and the pulpiteers who shouted head-lines and yellow journalism from their rostrums, more for the purpose of self-advertisement than for any devotion to Christly principles of sympathy and gentle comprehension.

Jim was stupefied to find himself once more pilloried and portraited and ballyhooed in the newspapers. But he tightened his jaws and refused to be howled from his path by any coyote pursuit.

His next thought was of the New Jersey clergyman who had married him to Kedzie. He motored over to him.

Jim had told Dr. Mosely that clergymen ought to keep up with the news. He found, to his regret, that the New Jersey dominie did.

He remembered Jim well and heard him out, but shook his head. He explained why, patiently. He had been greatly impressed by the action of the House of Deputies of the Protestant Episcopal Church convened at St. Louis in October, 1916. A new canon had been proposed declaring that "no marriage shall be solemnized in this Church between parties, either of whom has a husband or wife still living, who has been divorced for any cause arising after marriage."

This meant that the innocent party, as well as the guilty, should be denied another chance. The canon had been hotly debated—so hotly that one preacher referred to any wedding of divorced persons as "filth marriage," and others were heard insisting that even Christ's acceptance of adultery as a cause for divorce was an interpolation in the text, and that the whole passage concerning the woman

taken in adultery was absent from some ancient manuscripts. A halt was called to this dangerous line of argument, and one clergyman protested that "the question of the integrity of the Scriptures is more important than the question of marriage and divorce." Another clergyman pleaded: "An indissoluble marriage is a fiction. What is the use of tying the Church up to a fiction? It is our business to teach and not to legislate." Eventually the canon was defeated. But many of the clergy were determined to follow it, anyway.

In any case, not only was Charity divorced, but she had been involved in Jim's divorce, and Jim, as the New Jersey preacher pointed out to him, was denied remarriage even by the civil law of New York. The appeal to New Jersey was plainly a subterfuge, and he begged Jim to give Charity up.

"You don't know what you ask," Jim cried. "I'll find somebody with a heart!" And he stormed out.

CHAPTER XVI

JIM reported to Charity his two defeats and the language he had heard and read. Charity's conscience was so clean that her reaction was one of wrath. She pondered her future and Jim's. She could not see what either of them had done so vile that they should be sentenced to celibacy for life, or more probably to an eventual inevitable horror of outward conformity and secret intrigue.

She knew too many people whose wedlock had been a lifelong tolerance of infamy on the part of one or both. Some of the bitterest enemies of divorce were persons who had found it quite unnecessary. She felt that to forgive and to forget became so anti-social a habit in matrimony that no divorce could be worse.

She was afraid of herself, too. She dared not trust herself with life alone. She was too human to be safe. Marriage with Jim would protect him and her from each other and from the numberless temptations awaiting them. Finally, there were no children in the matter.

All arguments prove too much and too little, and in the end become simply our own briefs for our own inclinations. Charity's mood being what it was, she adopted the line of reasoning that led to her own ambition. She spent much time on her knees, but communed chiefly with herself, and rose always confirmed in her belief that to marry Jim Dyckman was the next great business of her existence.

Jim, too, had grown unwontedly earnest. The marriage denounced by the religious had taken on a religious

quality. He was inclined to battle for it as for a creed, as the clergymen had battled vainly for the new canon.

He, too, felt a spirit of genuflexion and wanted to speak to God personally; to appeal to Him by a private petition as to a king whose ministers denied mercy.

By his bed he sank down and prayed. He was very solemn, but too uncertain of the solemn voice to use it. He half whispered, half thought:

"O God, I don't know how you want me to act. I only know that my heart keeps on calling for Charity and a home with her, and children some day. There'll never be any children for either of us if we obey the Church. Forgive me if I doubt what these preachers tell me, but I just can't believe it to be your voice. If it is not your voice, what is it that makes me feel it such a sin not to marry Charity? I'm going to, God, unless you stop me. I may be making a big mistake, but if I am you'll understand. You will not be mad at me any more than I am mad at my dog when he misunderstands me, for I know he is a good dog and wants to do what I want him to if he can only learn what it is. If it is not your will that I should marry Charity tell me now so that I can't misunderstand, for if you don't I'm going ahead. If I have to take the punishment afterward, I'll take it rather than leave that poor soul alone. Bless her, O God, and help me. Amen."

And now both Charity and Jim were ready for battle. She set her hand in Jim's and said that she would marry him in spite of all, but that she would not give up her hope of being married by one of her own faith until she had canvassed the entire clergy.

And then began one of the strangest quests ever undertaken, even in this transitional period of matrimony as an institution—a quest so strange that it would seem impossible if it had not actually happened. Jim and Charity hunted a preacher and the press hunted them.

While the journalists waited for the United States to

enter the war with soldiers, the reporters kept in practice by scouting after Jim Dyckman and sniping him whenever he showed his head. He succeeded only in getting his resignation from his regiment accepted. He planned to sail for France and fight for France as soon as he had married Charity.

When he failed to secure a minister by letter or telegram he set forth to make personal visits. Sometimes Charity went with him so that there should be no delay or time for a change of mood.

From city to town they went, from village to city, searching for an Episcopalian clergyman to say the desired words. Jim offered any bribery that might suffice, but ahead of him went his notoriety.

Many a warm-hearted clergyman felt sympathy for Jim and Charity and longed to end their curious pilgrimage, but dared not brave the wrath of his fellow-preachers or accept the unwelcome fame that awaited his blessing, and the discipline that would be meted out to him.

Jim's picture was so widely published that when he eluded one crowd another posse sprang up wherever he reappeared. His entrance into a town was a signal for the clergy to scurry to cover. Some of them, to put themselves on record and insure themselves against temptation, denounced Jim and his attachée as traveling fiends, emissaries of the devil.

The wealth that was their drag was proclaimed as their weapon.

The storm grew fiercer and the language more unrestrained. Jim and Charity, reading in the papers the terms applied to them, cowered and shuddered.

Charity grew haggard and peevish. Her obstinacy was hardly more than a lockjaw of fright, the stubbornness of a drowning child afraid to let go.

Jim was almost equally sick. The newspaper pursuit covered him with chagrin. His good old name was precious to him, and he knew how his mother and father were

suffering at its abuse, as well as for him in his fugitive distress.

Jim's mother was very much mother. She took into her breast every arrow shot at him. When she saw him she held him fiercely in her arms, her big frame aching with a Valkyrian ardor to lift the brave warrior on a winged horse and carry him away from the earth.

It is hard for the best of mothers to love even the best of daughters-in-law, for how can two fires prosper on the same fuel? It had been a little too hard for Mrs. Dyckman to love Kedzie. It was all too easy to hate her now and to denounce her till even Jim winced.

"Don't think of her, mother," he pleaded. "Don't let's speak of her any more. She's only one of my past mistakes. You never mention those—why not let her drop?"

"All right, honey. You must forgive me. I'm only a sour old woman and it breaks my heart to think of that little, common—"

"There you go again," her husband growled, sick with grief, too. "Let the little cat go."

"What's killing me," Jim said, "is thinking of what I've brought on Charity. It makes me want to die."

"But you'll have to live for her sake—and your mother's," said his mother. "Charity's the only woman I know that's worth fighting for. I've known her since she was born and I never knew her to do or say one single petty thing. She hasn't got one of those qualities that women hate so much in women."

"Then why should she have to suffer such persecution?" Jim cried. "My God! is chivalry dead in the world?"

His father flung his arm around him and hugged him roughly. "Not while there's a man like you to fight for a woman like her. I never was so proud of anything as I am of being the father of a big fellow like you, who can make a battle like yours for love of a woman."

"But why should I have to fight for her? Whose busi-

ness is it but ours that we want to get married decently and live together quietly? Isn't this a free country?"

"Only the press is free," said his father. "And poor Charity is getting nothing more than women have always got who've dared to ask for their own way. They used to throw 'em to the lions, or bowstring 'em in the harems. And in the days of real chivalry they burned 'em at the stake or locked 'em up in convents or castles. But don't you worry, Jim, Charity has you for a champion and she's mighty lucky. Go on and fight the muckers and the muckrakers, and don't let the reporters or the preachers scare you away from doing the one right thing."

The newspapers kept within the almost boundless limits of the libel law. Jim had publicity enough, and he did not care to add to it by a libel suit, nor could he bring himself to make a personal attack on any of his pursuers. His discretion took on the look of poltroonery and he groveled in shame.

One bitter day he motored with Charity to a village where a clergyman lived who had wearied of the persecution and volunteered his offices. When they arrived his wife told Jim that he was stricken ill. He had fretted himself into his bed.

Jim bundled Charity into his car and set forth again in a storm. The car skidded and turned turtle in a ditch. By some chance neither of them was more than bruised and muddied. The hamper of food was spilled and broken and they had hours to wait by the roadside while a wrecking crew came from the nearest city to right the car.

While they waited, forlorn and shivering, like two tramps rather than like two malefactors of great wealth, their hunger drove them to banquet on their little store.

Jim, gnawing at a crust of suspicious cleanliness, studied Charity where she huddled in the shelter of a dripping tree, like a queen driven forth into exile. And the tears poured from his eyes and salted the bread. He had eaten

the food of his own tears. He had tasted life and found it bitter.

When the men came with the ropes and the tackle necessary and slowly righted the car he found that its engine ran again and he had speed and strength once more as his servants. He tried to encourage Charity with a figure of speech.

"They've got us ditched, honey, for a while, but we'll get righted soon and then life will be as smooth as smooth."

She tried to smile for his sake, but she had finished with hope.

CHAPTER XVII

WHILE Jim and Charity sat by the roadside the Marchioness of Strathdene, *née* Kedzie Thropp, of Nimrim, sat on a fine cushion and salted with her tears the toasted English crumpet she was having with her tea.

She had been married indeed, but the same ban that fell upon Jim's remarriage had forbidden her the wedding of her dreams. She was the innocent party to the divorce and she was married in a church. But it was not of the Episcopal creed, which she was now calling the Church of England. Kedzie-like, she still wanted what she could not get and grieved over what she got. It is usual to berate people of her sort, but they are no more to be blamed than other dyspeptics. Souls, like stomachs, cannot always co-ordinate appetite and digestion.

Kedzie had, however, found a husband who would be permanently precious to her, since she would never be certain of him. Like her, he was restless, volatile, and maintained his equilibrium as a bicycle does only by keeping on going. He was mad to be off to the clouds of France. There was a delay because ships were sailing infrequently, and their departure was kept secret. Passengers had to go aboard and wait.

Bidding "bon voyage" was no longer the stupid dock-party platitude it had been. It was bidding "good-by" with faint hope of "*au revoir*." Ladies going abroad, even brides, thought little of their deck costumes so long as they included a well-tailored life-preserver.

Mrs. Thropp stared at Kedzie and breathed hard in her creaking satin. And Adna looked out at her over the high

collar that took a nip at his Adam's apple every time he swallowed it.

The old parents were sad with an unwonted sorrow. They had money at last and they had even been hauled up close to the aristocracy as the tail to Kite Kedzie. But now they had time to realize that they were to lose this pretty thing they had somehow been responsible for yet unable to control. They had nearly everything else, so their child was to be taken from them.

Suddenly they loved her with a grave-side ache. She was their baby, their little girl, their youth, their beauty, their romance, their daughter. And perhaps in a few days she would be shattered and dead in a torpedoed ship. Perhaps in some high-flung lifeboat she would be crouching all drenched and stuttering with cold and dying with terror.

Mrs. Thropp broke into big sobs that jolted her sides and she fell over against Adna, who did not know how to comfort her. He held her in arms like a bear's and patted her with heavy paws, but she felt on her head the drip-drip of his tears. And thus Kedzie by her departure brought them together in a remarriage, a poor sort of honeymoon wherein they had little but the bitter-sweet privilege of helping each other suffer.

The picture of their welded misery brought Kedzie a return, too, to her child hunger for parentage. She wanted a mother and a father and she could not have them. She went to put her exquisite arms about them and the three so dissimilar heads were grotesquely united.

The Marquess of Strathdene pretended to be disgusted and stormed out. But that was because he did not want to be seen making an ass of himself, weeping as Bottom the Weaver wept. He flung away his salted and extinguished cigarette and wondered what was the matter with the world where nothing ever came out right.

His own mother was weeping all the time and her letters told always of new losses. The newspapers kept printing

stories of Strathdene's chums being put away in a trench or a hospital, or falling from the clouds dead.

And starvation was coming everywhere; in England there was talk of famine, and all America had gone mad with fear of it. But still the war went on in a universal suicide which nobody could stop, and peace, the one thing that everybody wanted, was wanted by nobody on any terms that anybody else would even discuss.

As he agonized with his philosophy and lighted another cigarette, the street roared like hurricane. Below the windows the French Mission was proceeding up Fifth Avenue. Maréchal Joseph Joffre and René Viviani were awakening tumult in the American heart and stirring it to the rescue of France and of England and of Belgium and Italy, with what outcome none could know. One could only know that at last the great flood of war had encircled the United States, reducing it to the old primeval problems and emotions: how to get enough to eat, how to get weapons, how to find and beat down the enemy, how to endure the farewells of fathers, mothers, sons, sisters, sweethearts, wives. Everything was complex beyond understanding for minds, but things were very simple for hearts; they had only to ache with sorrow or wrath.

The Marchioness of Strathdene and her airy husband reached England without being submarined, and there, to her great surprise, Kedzie found a whole new universe of things not quite right. "If only it were otherwise!" was still the perpetual alibi of contentment.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM the glory of the festivals of alliance Jim Dyckman and Charity Coe were absent. Both were so eager to be abroad in the battle that they did not miss the flag-waving. But they wanted to cross the sea together. The importance of this ambition tempted Charity to a desperate conclusion that the formalities of her union with Jim did not matter so long as they were together. Yet the risk of death was so inescapable and she was so imbued with churchliness that her dreams were filled with visions of herself dead and buried in unhallowed ground, of herself and Jim standing at heaven's gate and turned away for lack of a blessing on their union.

Her soul was about ready to break completely, but her body gave out first. It was in a small town in New Jersey that they found themselves weather-bound.

The sky seemed to rain ice-water and they took refuge in the village's one hotel, a dismal place near the freight-station. The entrance was up a narrow staircase, past a bar-room door.

The rooms were ill furnished and ill kept, and the noise of screaming locomotives and jangling freight-cars was incessant. But there was no other hospitality to be had in the town.

Jim left Charity at her door and begged her to sleep. Her dull eyes and doddering head promised for her.

He went to his own room and laughed at the cheap wretchedness of it: the cracked pitcher in the cracked bowl, the washstand whose lower door would not stay open, the two yellow towels in the rack, the bureau, the

cane chairs, and the iron bed with its thin mattress and neglected drapery.

He lowered himself into a rickety rocker and looked out through the dirtier window at the dirty town. The only place to go was to sleep, and he tried to make the journey. But a ferocious resentment at the idiocy of things drove away repose.

He resolved that he had been a fool long enough. He would give up the vain effort to conform, and would take Charity without sanction. He was impatient to go to her then and there, but he dared not approach her till she had rested.

He remembered a book he had picked up at one of their villages of denial. It was one of those numberless books everybody is supposed to have read. For that reason he had found it almost impossible to begin. But he was desperate enough to read even a classic. He hoped that it would be a soporific. That was his definition of a classic.

The book was the Reverend Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia*. Jim was down on the Episcopal clergy one and all, and he read with prejudice, skipping the preface, of course, which set forth the unusual impulse of a churchman to help the Church of his own day by pointing out the crimes and errors of the Church of an earlier day; a too, too rare appeal to truth for the sake of salvation by the way of truth.

As Jim glanced angrily through the early pages, the pictures of life in the fifth century caught and quickened his gritty eyes. He skimmed the passages that did not hold him, but as the hours went on he grew more unable to let go.

The sacred lunch hour passed by ignored. The rain beat down on the roof as the words rained up from the page. The character of that eminently wise and beautiful and good Hypatia seemed to be Charity in ancient costume. The hostility of the grimy churchmen of that day infuriated him. He cursed and growled as he read.

The persecution of Hypatia wrought him to such wrath

that he wanted to turn back the centuries and go to her defense. He breathed hard as he came to the last of the book and read of the lynching of Hypatia, the attack of the Christians upon her chariot, the dragging of her exquisite body through the streets, and even into the church, and up to the altar, up to the foot of "the colossal Christ watching unmoved from off the wall, his right hand raised to give a blessing—or a curse?"

Jim panted as Philammon did, tracing her through the streets by the fragments of her torn robes and fighting through the mob in vain to reach her and shield her. He became Philammon and saw not words on a page, but a tragedy that lived again.

She shook herself free from her tormentors, and, springing back, rose for one moment to her full height, naked, snow-white against the dusky mass around—shame and indignation in those wide clear eyes, but not a stain of fear. With one hand she clasped her golden locks around her; the other long white arm was stretched upward toward the great still Christ, appealing—and who dare say, in vain?—from man to God. Her lips were opened to speak; but the words that should have come from them reached God's ear alone; for in an instant Peter struck her down, the dark mass closed over her again . . . and then wail on wail, long, wild, ear-piercing, rang along the vaulted roofs and thrilled like the trumpet of avenging angels through Philammon's ears.

Crushed against a pillar, unable to move in the dense mass, he pressed his hands over his ears. He could not shut out those shrieks! When would they end? What in the name of the God of mercy were they doing? Tearing her piecemeal? Yes, and worse than that. And still the shrieks rang on, and still the great Christ looked down on Philammon with that calm, intolerable eye, and would not turn away. And over His head was written in the rainbow, "I am the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever!" The same as He was in Judea of old, Philammon? Then what are these, and in whose temple? And he covered his face with his hands, and longed to die.

It was over. The shrieks had died away into moans; the moans to silence. How long had he been there? An hour, or an eternity? Thank God it was over! For her sake—but for theirs?

Startled by the vividness of the murder, Jim looked up from the book, thinking that he had heard indeed the shrieks of Charity in a death-agony. The walls seemed to quiver still with their reverberation.

He put down the book in terror and saw where he was. It was like waking from a nightmare. He was glad to find that he was not in a temple of ancient Alexandria, but in even that dingy New Jersey inn.

He wondered if Charity had not died. He hesitated to go to her door and knock. She needed sleep so much that he hardly dared to risk waking her, even to assure himself that she was alive.

He went to the window and saw two men under umbrellas talking in the yard between the hotel wings. They would not have been laughing as they were if they had heard shrieks.

His eye was caught by a window opposite his. There sat Charity in a heavy bath-robe; her hair was down; she had evidently dropped into the chair by the open window and fallen asleep.

Jim stared at her and was reminded of how he had stared at Kedzie on his other wedding journey. Only, Kedzie had been his bride, and Charity was not yet, and might never be. Kedzie was girlish against an auroral sky; she was rather illumined than dressed in silk. Charity was a heart-sick woman, driven and fagged, and swaddled now in a heavy woolen blanket of great bunches and wrinkles. Kedzie was new and pink and fresh as any dew-dotted morning-glory that ever sounded its little bugle-note of fragrance. Charity was an old sweetheart, worn, drooping, wilted as a broken rose left to parch with thirst.

Yet it was Charity that made his heart race with love and desire and determination. She was Hypatia to him and he vowed that the churchmen should not deny her nor destroy her. He clenched his fists with resolution, then went back to his book and finished it. He loved it so well that he forgave the Church and the clergy somewhat for

the sake of this clergyman who had spoken so sturdily for truth and beauty and mercy. He loved the book so well that he even read the preface and learned that Hypatia really lived once and was virtuous, though pagan, and was stripped and slain at the Christian altar, chopped and mutilated with oyster shells in a literal ostracism, her bones burned and her ashes flung into the sea.

The lesson Kingsley drew from her fate was that the Church was fatally wrong to sanction "those habits of doing evil that good may come, of pious intrigue, and at last of open persecution, which are certain to creep in wheresoever men attempt to set up a merely religious empire, independent of human relationships and civil laws." The preacher-novelist warned the Church of now that the same old sins of then were still at work.

Jim closed the book and returned to the window to study Charity. He vowed that he would protect her from that ostracism. His wealth was but a broken sword, but it should save her.

He felt it childish of her to be so set upon a wedding at the hands of one of the clergymen who stoned her, but he liked her better for finding something childish and stubborn in her. She was so good, so wise, so noble, so all-for-others, that she needed a bit of obstinate foolishness to keep her from being absolute marble.

He put on his hat and his raincoat and went out into the town, hunting a clergyman, resolved to compel him at all costs. The sudden shower became lyrical to his mood as a railroad train clicks to the mood of the passenger.

There was but one Episcopal church in the village and the parsonage was a doleful little cottage against a shabby temple. The hotelkeeper had told him how to find it, and the name of the parson.

Jim tapped piously on the door, then knocked, then pounded. At length a voice came to him from somewhere, calling:

"Come into the church!"

"That's what I've been trying to do for weeks," Jim growled. He went into the church and found the parson in his shirt-sleeves. He had been setting dishpans and wash-tubs and pails under the various jets of water that came in through the patched roof in unwelcome libations.

His sleeves were rolled up and he was rolling up pew cushions. He gave Jim a wet hand and peered at him curiously. It relieved Jim not to be recognized and regarded as a visiting demon.

The clergyman's high black waistcoat was frayed and shiny, as well as wet, and his reverted collar had an evident edge from the way the preacher kept moistening his finger and running it along the rim. In spite of this worse than a hair-shirt martyrdom, the parson seemed to be a mild and pitiful soul, and Jim felt hopeful of him as he began:

"I must apologize, Mr. Rutledge, for intruding on you, but I—well, I've got more money than I need and I imagine you've got less. I want to give you a little of mine for your own use. Is there any place you could put ten thousand dollars where it would do some good?"

Young Mr. Rutledge felt for a moment that he was dreaming or delirious. He made Jim repeat his speech; then he stammered:

"Oh, my dear sir! The wants of this parish! and my poor chapel! You can see the state of the roof, and the broken windows. The people are too poor to pay for repairs. My own pittance is far in arrears, but I can't complain of that since so many of my dear flock are in need. I was just about persuaded that we should have to abandon the fight to keep the church alive. I had not counted on miracles, but it seems that they do occur."

"Well, I'm not exactly a miracle-worker, but I've got some money you can have if—there's a string to it, of course. But you could use ten thousand dollars, couldn't you?"

"Indeed not," said Mr. Rutledge, feeling as Faust must have felt when Mephisto began to promise things. A

spurt of water from a new leak brought him back from the Middle Ages and he cried: "You might lend a hand with this tub, sir, if you will."

When the new cascade was provided for, Jim renewed his bids for the preacher's soul:

"If you can't use ten thousand, how much could you use?"

"I don't know."

"Well, you could use a new roof at least. I'll give you a new roof, and a real stained-glass window of Charity to replace that broken imitation atrocity, and a new organ and hymn-books, and new pew covers, and I'll pay your arrears of salary and guarantee your future, and I'll give you an unlimited drawing account for your poor, and—any other little things you may think of."

Mr. Rutledge protested:

"It's rather cruel of you, sir, to make such jokes at such a time."

"God bless you, old man! I never was so much in earnest. It's easy for me to do those little trifles."

"Then you must be an angel straight from heaven."

"I'm an angel, they tell me, but from the opposite direction. It's plain you don't know who I am. Sit down and I'll tell you the story of my life."

So the little clergyman in his shirt-sleeves sat shivering with incipient pneumonia and beatitude, and by his side in the damp pew in the dark chapel Jim sat in his raincoat and unloaded his message.

The Reverend Mr. Rutledge had heard of Jim and of Charity, and had regretted the assault of their moneyed determination on the bulwarks of his faith. But somehow as he heard Jim talk he found him simple, honest, forlorn, despised and rejected, and in desperate necessity.

He looked at his miserable church and thought of his flock. Jim's money would put shingles on the rafters and music in the hymns and food in the hungry. It became a largess from heaven.

He could see nothing, hear nothing, but a call to accept. He asked for a moment to consider. He retired to pray.

His prayer was interrupted by one of his hungriest parishioners, a Mrs. McGillicuddy, one of those poor old washerwomen whose woes pile up till they are almost laughable to a less humorous heart than the little preacher's. He asked her to wait and returned to his prayers.

His sheep seemed to gather about their shepherd and bleat for pasture and shelter. They answered his prayer for him. He came back and said:

"I will."

"I do," was what Jim and Charity said a little later when Jim had wrested Charity from her sleep by pounding at her door. He waited, frantically, while she dressed. And he had the town's one hack at the door below. He was afraid that the parson would change his mind before they could get the all-important words out of him.

They rode through the rain like Heine's couple in the old stage-coach, with Cupid, the blind passenger, between them. They ran into the church under the last bucketfuls of shower. Jim produced the license he had carried so long in vain. The washerwoman consented to be one witness; the sexton-janitor made the other.

Jim had the ring ready, too. He had carried it long enough. It made a little smoldering glimmer in the dusk church. He knelt by Charity during the prayer, and helped her to her feet, and the little clergyman kissed her with fearsome lips. Jim nearly kissed him himself.

He did hug Mrs. McGillicuddy, and pressed into her hand a bill that she thought was a dollar and blessed him for. When she got home and found what it was she almost fainted into one of her own tubs.

Jim left a signed check for the minister, with the sum-lines blank, and begged him not to be a miser. They left with him a great doubt as to what the Church would do to him for doing what he had done for his chapel. But he

was as near to a perfection of happiness as he was likely ever to be.

His future woes were for him, as Charity's and Jim's were for them. They would be sufficient to their several days; but for this black rainy night there were no sorrows.

It was too late to get back to the city and luxury—and notoriety. They stayed where they were and were glad enough. They expected to fare worse on the battle-front in France where they would spend their honeymoon.

There was some hesitation as to which of their two rooms at the hotel was the less incommodious, but the furniture had been magically changed. Everything was velvet and silk; what had been barrenness was a noble simplicity; what had been dingy was glamorous.

The ghastly dinner sent up from the dining-room was a great banquet, and the locomotive whistles and the thunderous freight-cars were epithalamial flutes and drums.

Outside, the world was a rainy, clamorous, benighted place. And to-morrow they must go forth into it again. But for the moment they would snatch a little rapture, finding it the more fearfully beautiful because it was so dearly bought and so fleeting, but chiefly beautiful because they could share it together.

They were mated from the first, and all the people and the trials that had kept them apart were but incidents in a struggle toward each other. Henceforth they should win on side by side as one completed being, doing their part in war and peace, and compelling at last from the world, along with the blame and the indifference that every one has always had from the world, a certain praise and gratitude which the world gives only to those who defy it for the sake of what their own souls tell them is good and true and honorable.

THE END

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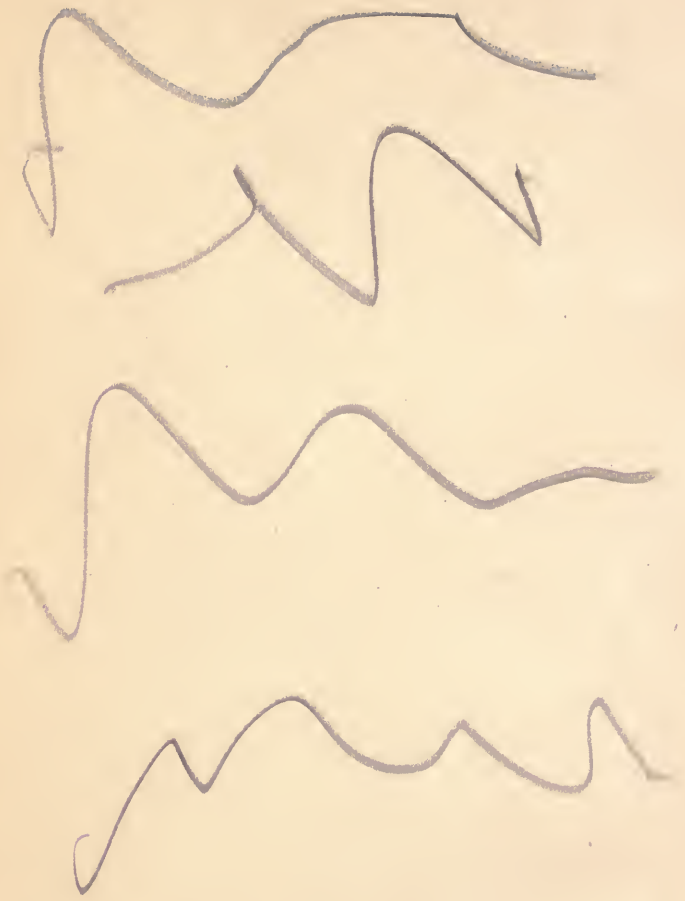

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